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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

A fresh green summer

Andy Sturgeon's richly planted urban garden

DAN PEARSON uncovers the beauty of Cedric Morris irises

10 PERFECT PLANTS for striking foliage and exotic flowers

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Editor's letter

The garden is at that wonderful balance point: the first flush of spring is past; the intensity of summer is yet to come. The garden in May has a determination and energy all of its own. Vibrant, green foliage and blousy flowers have a fresh, restorative appeal.

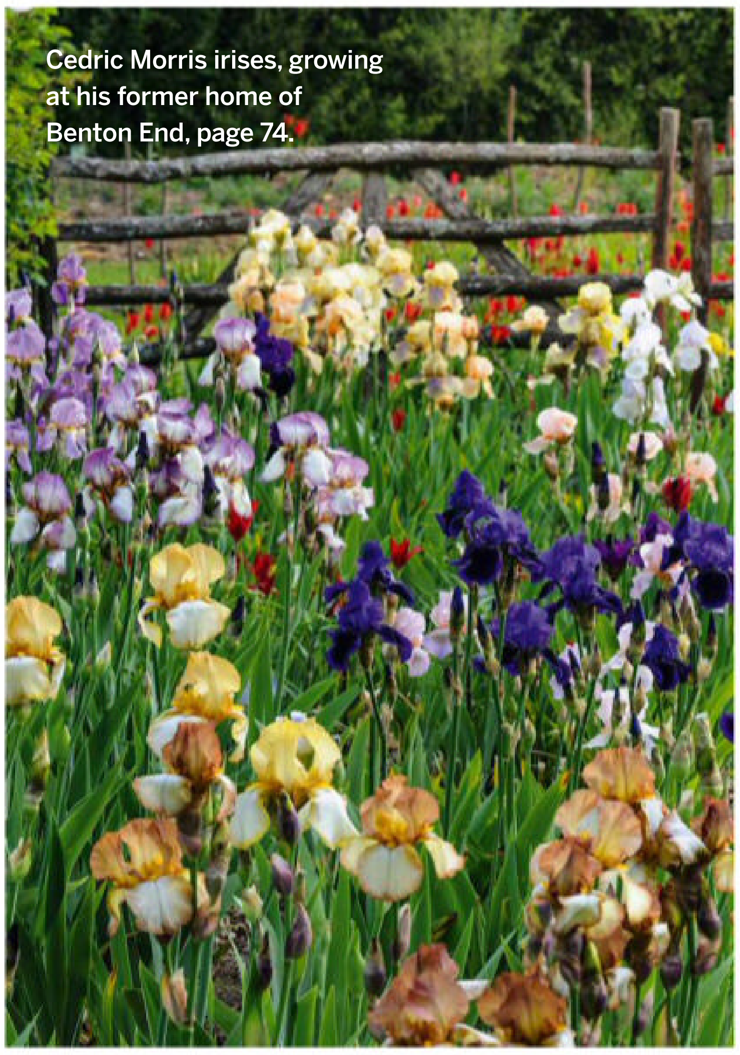
Bearded irises are one of the true stars in May, and on page 74, designer Dan Pearson reveals his passion for those bred by artist gardener Cedric Morris back in the mid-20th century. Growing as many as 1,000 seedlings a year, Morris selected those that he was drawn to for their 'elegance, pride and delicacy'. It has become the life's work of former Sissinghurst head gardener Sarah Cook to find and re-establish a collection of Benton Iris (named after Morris's home Benton End in Suffolk where he amassed much of his collection) as bred by Morris, and now Dan Pearson finds himself similarly drawn to Morris's selections for their 'mutable colouring' and delicate speckling.

More usually in May we might expect to be talking about the designer show gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. This year, with the show still some months away, we get a glimpse of Chelsea award winner Andy Sturgeon's own garden – small, perfectly fit for purpose as a family garden, filled with brilliant design ideas and richly planted.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR



Cedric Morris irises, growing at his former home of Benton End, page 74.

JASON INGRAM

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CLAIRE TAKACS

James Alexander-Sinclair's design for a Cotswold garden conjures the dreamy feel of a meadow, page 66.

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COVER IMAGE

Andy Sturgeon's garden by Jason Ingram

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- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 26
- Save up to 25% on two iris collections from Woottens of Wenhaston† – page 119
- Don't miss Troy Scott Smith's online masterclass on how to use old roses in a modern garden – page 120
- Win a Southwold Collection Bistro Set for summer entertaining from Harrod Horticultural†– page 121

† Competition and reader offer open to mainland UK residents only.

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Contributors

Eva Nemeth
Eva photographs Alison Jenkins' container planting ideas, page 48. *"Alison's eye for detail, her choice of plants and containers always impresses me. I'm sure readers will be equally inspired."*

Marina Christopher
Marina recommends the best umbellifers, page 54. *"Essential for insect biodiversity, the Apiaceae family includes many favourite root vegetables and herbs."*

Rebecca Bernstein
Rebecca photographs a beautiful Oxfordshire garden, page 84. *"Castle End was a delight to photograph. The walled garden, full of umbellifers, had a touch of fairy-tale magic."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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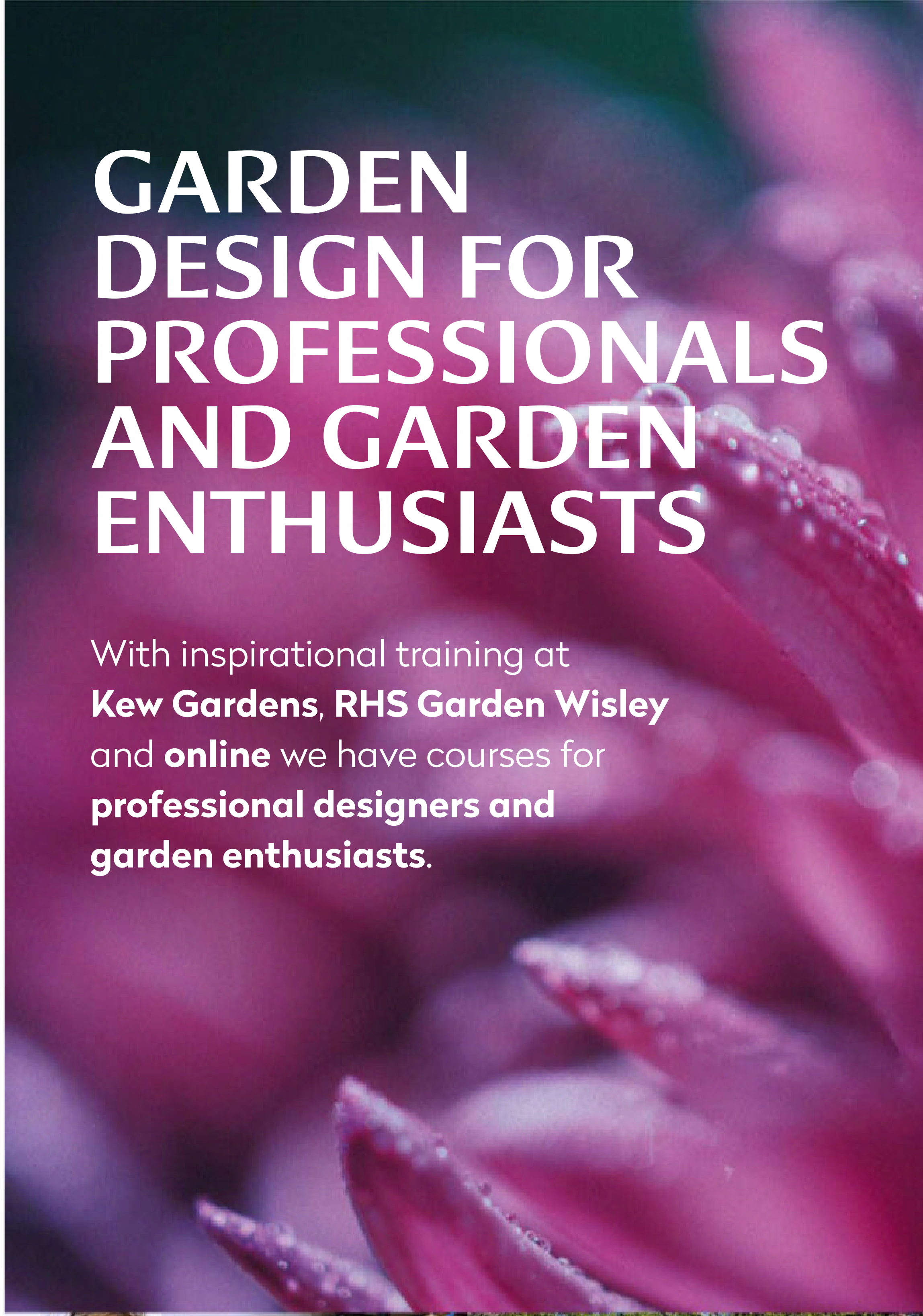

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REUNITING INVESTORS WITH LOST INVESTMENTS & INHERITANCES

It can be incredibly easy to lose track of your money, whether it's in a bank account, pension, investment, life insurance policy or child trust fund. There can be so much to remember, so it's not surprising. In fact, it's estimated that as many as 20 million people in the UK have forgotten about, or been separated from, more than £15 billion across a variety of account types.[1,2]

DORMANT ACCOUNTS

These accounts are known as dormant accounts and they're quite common, as many people lose track of what they have, move home without updating their address, and even inherit unknowingly. Many providers are now trying to locate 'lost' owners with varied results, but doing so is not just best practice, but also demonstrates high levels of governance and investor care.

HENRY'S STORY

When Henry's wife, Naomi, sadly passed away 22 years ago, he had no idea she owned Alliance Trust shares. They had been a gift from her father and had flown under the radar for over two decades. Alliance Trust, as part of a proactive programme to find investment owners, accessed Naomi's will and discovered her husband's name. The Company then used LinkedIn to get intouch and let Henry know that 8,700 shares (and £16,500 in dividends) were his to claim.

> "Once the whole process is done and dusted, the money will go to our children who are now young adults, and will help towards deposits for their first flats." **HENRY**

REUNITING INVESTORS

One of the UK's longest-established investment trusts, Alliance Trust, takes its responsibility to investors seriously and has been doing its part to reunite investors with sometimes life-changing sums of money. Henry (see above) is just one of the investors the Trust has helped recently.

BEING PROACTIVE IS KEY

Alliance Trust takes an active, personal approach to reuniting people with lost shares. In fact, it's an investment trust that does a lot of the hard work for DIY investors. The Company's investment strategy is designed to be a core holding for every portfolio, whatever your stage in life. Trusted by generations since 1888, the Company's multi-manager approach aims to add value by including only the managers' very best ideas in the portfolio, with the intention of outperforming the world stock market[3] (while shielding you from some of the risks of active investing by spreading capital across eight skilled Stock Pickers).

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1. https://www.gretel.co.uk/media-centre, press release 17/11/2020 2. https://www.uar.co.uk/Help/AboutLostAssets 3. MSCI All Country World Index.

When investing, your capital is at risk. The value of your investment may rise or fall as a result of market fluctuations and you might get back less than you invested.

> “The most important role of an independent board of directors for an investment trust is to protect shareholders. We not only oversee investments, but also ensure shareholders are treated fairly. At Alliance Trust we have a programme for tracking down dormant shareholders. We are always delighted when we reunite them with their lost assets. It’s particularly pleasing to see shares passed down the generations and retained for the long term.”

Clare Dobie, Director of Alliance Trust

Find out more about Alliance Trust at **alliancetrust.co.uk**

TRACKING DOWN DORMANT ACCOUNTS

Even if you don’t think you’ve lost or forgotten any accounts, here are some ways you can be proactive too and keep your affairs in order:

1 If you move house, make sure you provide your new address to every financial services provider you have dealings with – including the ones you rarely hear from or contact.

2 If you change your bank account, check bank statements over the previous year to ensure you have updated every organisation that pays into your account or that you make payments to.

3 Maintain a paper or online record of your investments and insurance policies, including account numbers. If company names change or you switch to a new provider, update the topsheet.

4 Even if you already have a workplace pension into which you’re making contributions, consider setting up a SIPP (Self-Invested Personal Pension) account where you can consolidate any pensions from previous jobs. The government’s free Pension Tracing Service may be able to help you find any you have lost the details for, but this is an area where it really is important to hang on to the paperwork.

5 One way of managing your affairs, which is also designed to make life straightforward for the executors of your estate after you die, is to make use of the List pals app. It’s free to download from listpals.com

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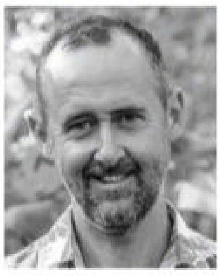

TOUR HOSTS

Jimi Blake is an expert gardener and plantsperson, whose own garden expresses a dynamic approach to planting. This years he's also our plant expert selecting his Plantperson's Favourites each month. He will be accompanied on the tour by host **Sophie Piebenga**, whose knowledge and love of gardens stems from her training with Kew and the National Trust.

Jimi Blake is the owner and enthusiastic gardener at **Hunting Brook Gardens** in Co Wicklow. The garden is renowned for its modern and inventive plantings, and Jimi's plant choices always excite and delight. This is where you'll start your tour and Jimi will talk you through the garden's seasonal highlights and his approach to plant combinations. The tour continues with Jimi taking you on to his sister **June Blake**'s small but painterly garden in Tinode, and then the garden of gardening doyenne Helen Dillon, who has recently transposed her ideas, developed over several decades, to a new and smaller space. You'll also discover the beautifully meditative garden **Patthana,** and the varied garden of **Ardán**, impressively located on the hilly peninsula overlooking Dublin Bay. Visits to these and further unique and considered, private and award-winning gardens allow guests to meet the owners, garner expert advice and drink in the beauty of contrasting gardens that take you right to the warm heart of the Irish gardening world. Jimi describes the trip as rolling from house party to house party, which together with comfortable accommodation and excellent food will make for a convivial trip full of garden experiences and discoveries.

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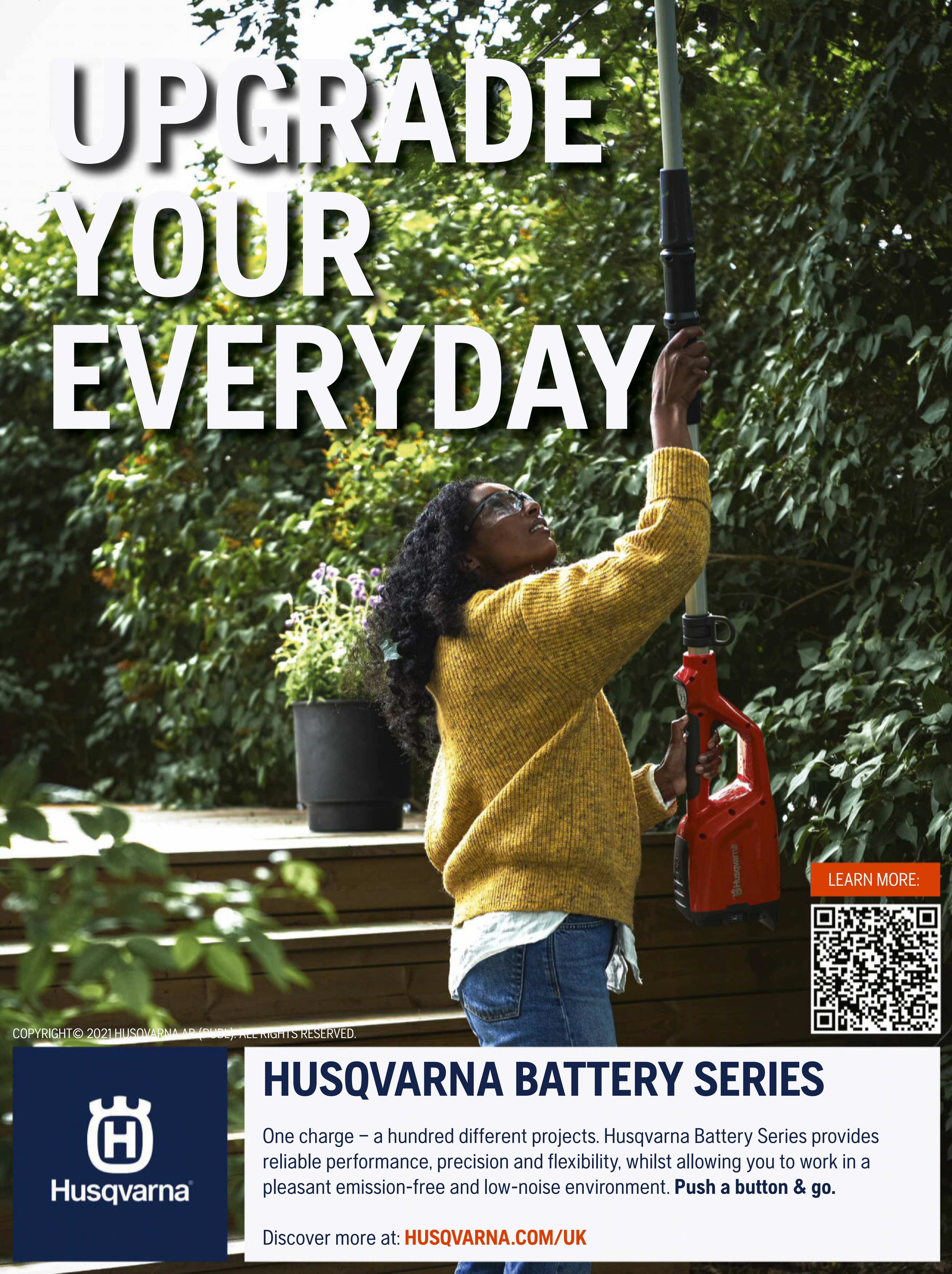

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DIG IN

What's happening, what's in flower and what to buy this month

SOPHIA SPRING.

Crowning glory

You may feel you need little excuse to spend time in your garden, but if like many gardeners you can sometimes get so caught up in the joy of creating a garden you don't always take the time to sit back and enjoy your creation, then Garden Day on 9 May is your excuse to do exactly that. For three years now, the organisers of this spring event have been encouraging everyone to put down their tools, don a flower crown and spend a relaxing Sunday with family and friends in their garden – an idea that this year seems especially welcome. "Now more than ever, we've all seen how gardens can make a powerful difference to our wellbeing. It doesn't seem to matter whether you've got window boxes, a suburban plot or a country home, the effect is the same," said TV broadcaster, Rachel de Thame who along with fellow plant fanatics Hazel Gardiner, Arthur Parkinson, Lisa Snowdon and Nikki Tibbles is helping to promote the event. Head to the website to find out how to make your own flower crown, download fun masks for kids and find plenty of ideas for making your socially distanced Garden Day party a success. **gardenday.co.uk**

News

COMPILED BY KATIE BEALE

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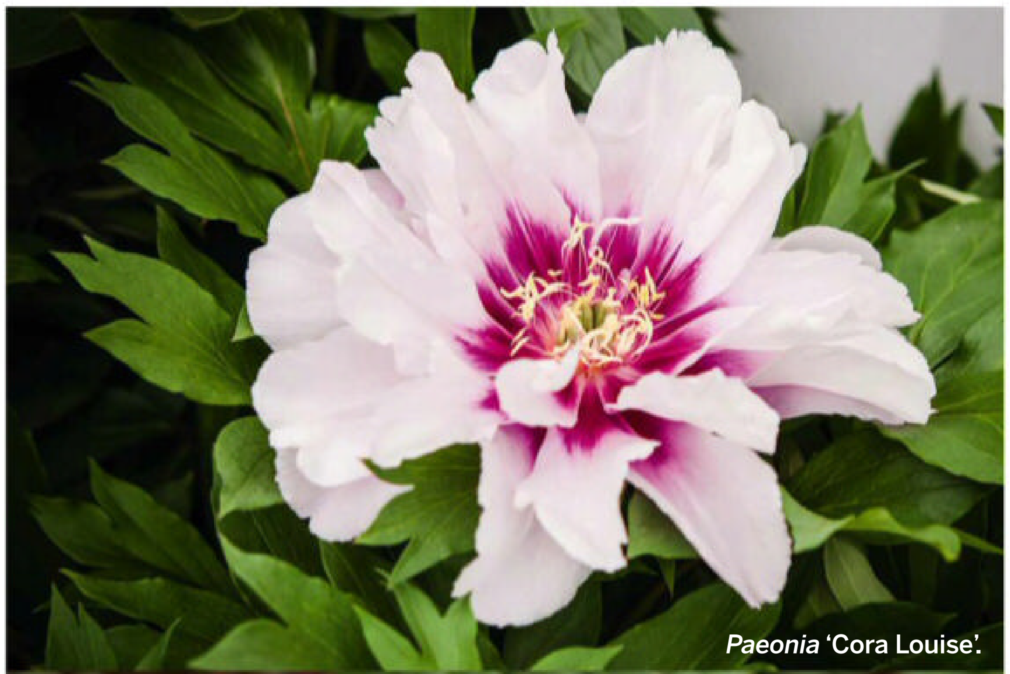
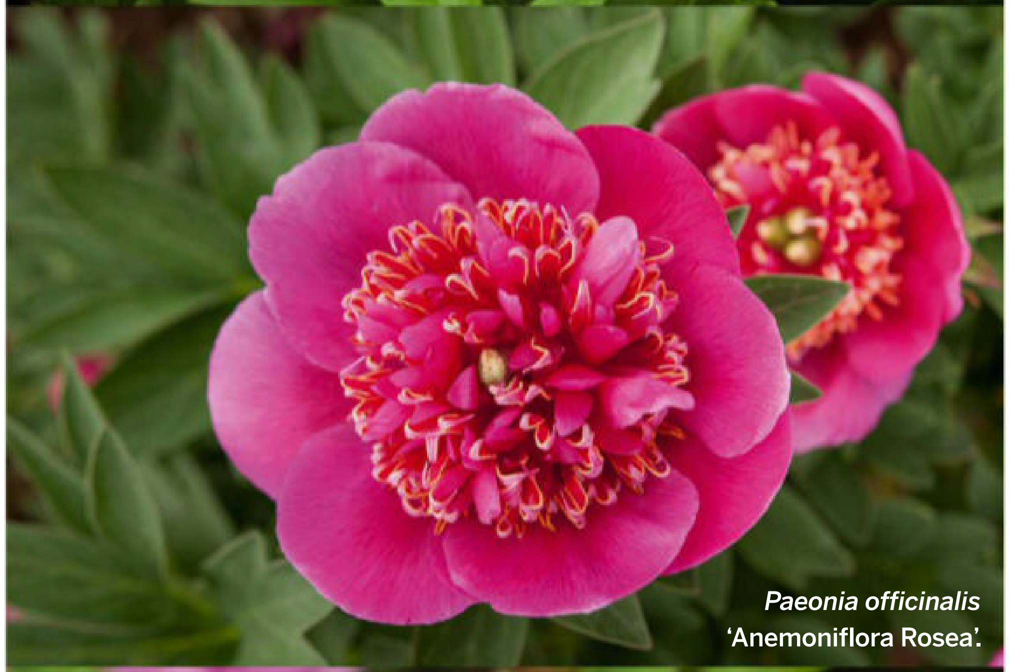
Just as more of us are now choosing to share our homes with an increasingly exotic array of houseplants, a new range of care products from Plantsmith has arrived to make it easy to keep them happy and healthy. Offering five specialist formulations, including Fortifying Houseplant Food & Tonic, Beautifying Leaf Shine Spray and Invigorating Orchid Care Mist, the care system will keep even the most demanding of houseplants looking their best. All are available from John Lewis and selected garden centres, with prices starting at £14.99. **plantsmith.co.uk**

SUMMER BLOOMS

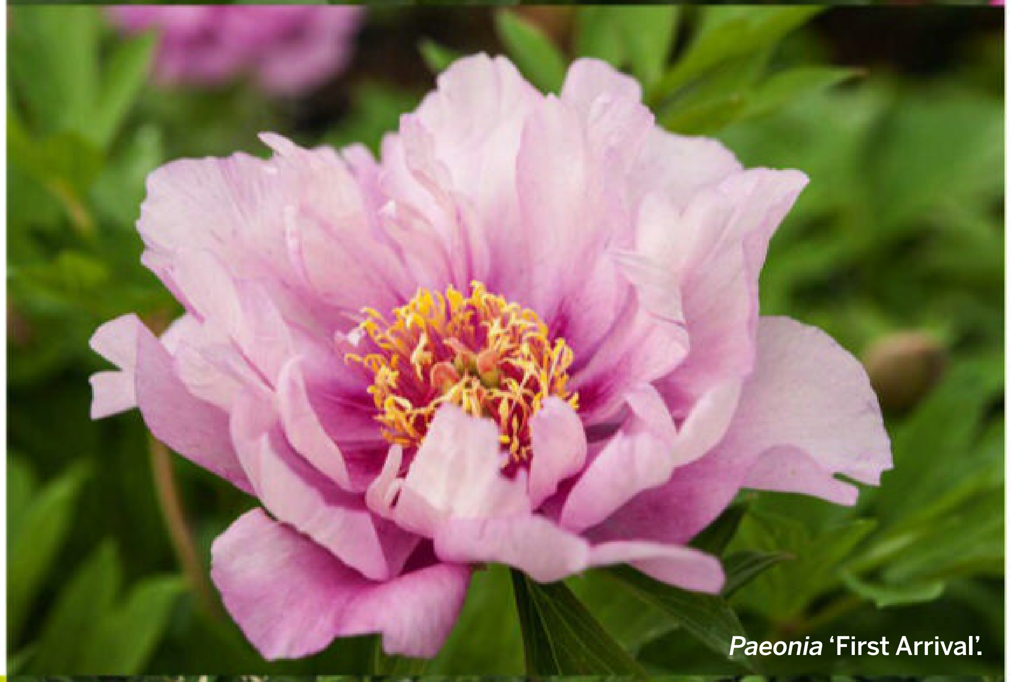
Few flowers are quite as evocative of early summer as peonies, and if you're looking to add some of their blousy beauty to your garden then it is worth heading to Primrose Hall Peonies. The Bedfordshire nursery has the largest selection of rare and collectable peonies for sale in the UK, including many intersectional peonies and 39 of the peonies awarded an AGM in the recently completed RHS Wisley trial. Among the new AGMs are 'Cora Louise' an intersectional peony with scented, pink flowers and finely cut foliage that turns red in spring and autumn, and 'Claire de Lune' a beautiful herbaceous peony with pale lemon-yellow, single flowers and a delicate fragrance. **primrosehallpeonies.co.uk**



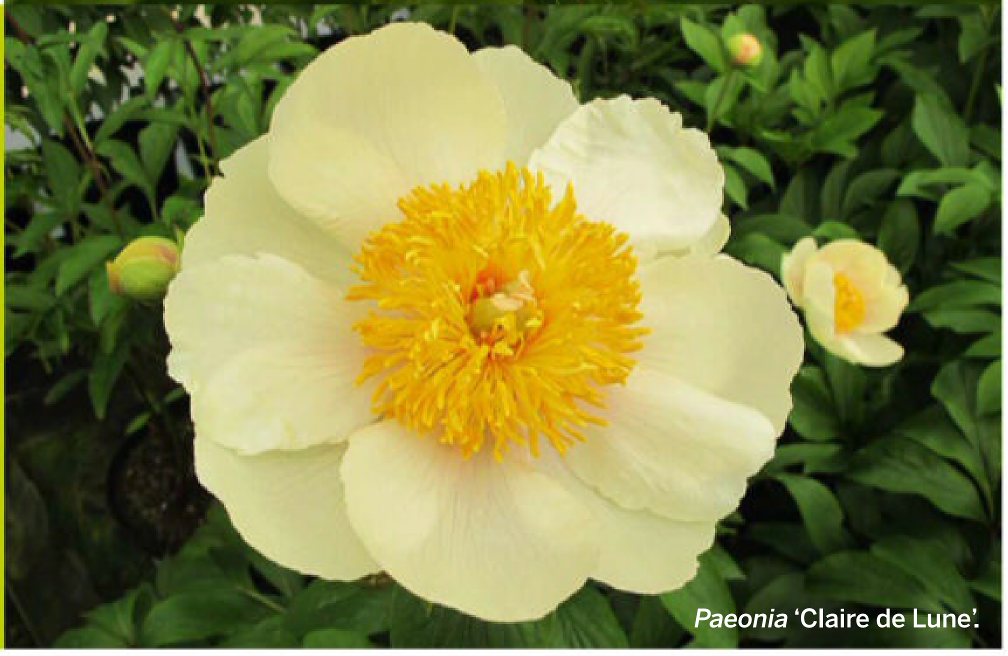
Paeonia 'Cora Louise'.



Paeonia officinalis 'Anemoniflora Rosea'.

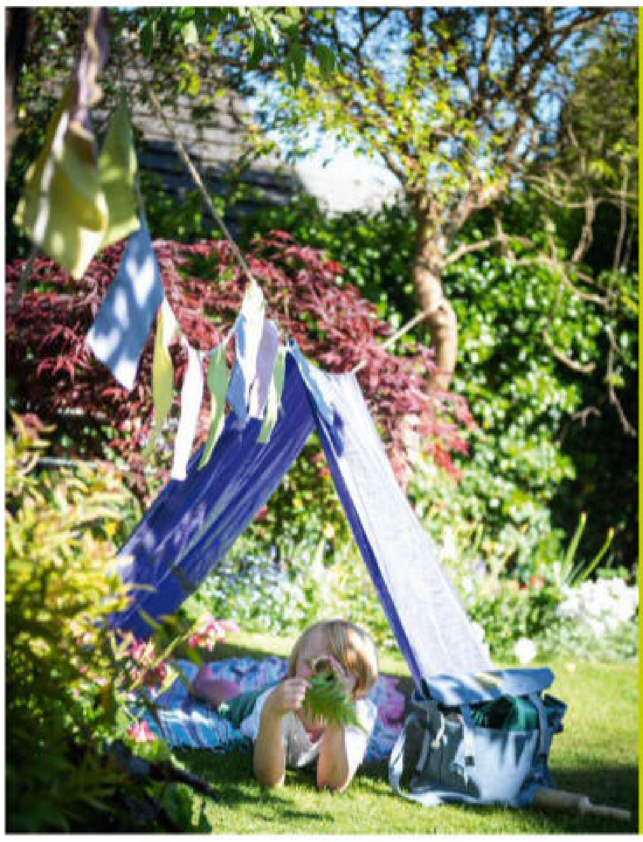


Paeonia 'First Arrival'.



Paeonia 'Claire de Lune'.

PRIMROSE HALL PEONIES



Adventure play

Give children some space to hideaway in the garden this summer with the Cottage Garden Den Kit from the Den Kit Company. The kit includes a tough, waterproof tarpaulin and groundsheet, 10m of jute rope, tent pegs and a mallet, and even some colourful bunting for an added creative touch. It also comes with a fun guide to spotting patterns in nature, a fly-eye kaleidoscope and a handy blue haversack bag to carry the kit on adventures. It costs £45 from **thedenkitco.com**

Virtual treats

The RHS Chelsea Flower Show may have moved to autumn for 2021 but its quirky younger sibling the Chelsea Fringe Festival will still take place 15–23 May, albeit in a virtual format. Now in its 10th year the fringe festival will again offer a diverse range of floral installations and events that stretch far beyond Chelsea and combine horticulture with food, arts and science. This year the focus is on allotments and community garden projects, and all can be viewed online from the comfort of your own home or – WiFi permitting – garden. **chelseafringe.com**

GREAT DIXTER CHARITABLE TRUST, ANDREW MONTGOMERY

A four-year-old Christopher Lloyd gets an early taste of gardening.

Great friends

Born 100 years ago this year, the gardener and writer Christopher Lloyd spent a lifetime creating his dazzling gardens at Great Dixter. To mark his centenary the Great Dixter Charitable Trust is offering garden lovers the opportunity to become a Centenary Friend of the garden, and enjoy unlimited entry to the house and gardens for up to six people, and the chance to host a private drinks or tea party for six in the garden after hours – plus all the normal Friend benefits. Centenary Friendship requires a minimum donation of £1,000 and is limited to the first 100 applicants. It's available only in 2021, but is valid for ten years. **greatdixter.co.uk**

Essential inspiration

One of the early highlights of the flower show season has always been the Harrogate Spring Flower show held at the Great Yorkshire Showground. This year the traditional spring show has been replaced with a one-off, outdoor event called Spring Essentials, which takes place on 20-23 May. Featuring show gardens, plant nurseries and live theatres, it promises to be both a fun day out and the perfect opportunity to find inspiration for the new growing season. Tickets cost £15 and, as social distancing requirements mean that visitor numbers will be strictly limited, all tickets must be purchased in advance. **flowershow.org.uk**

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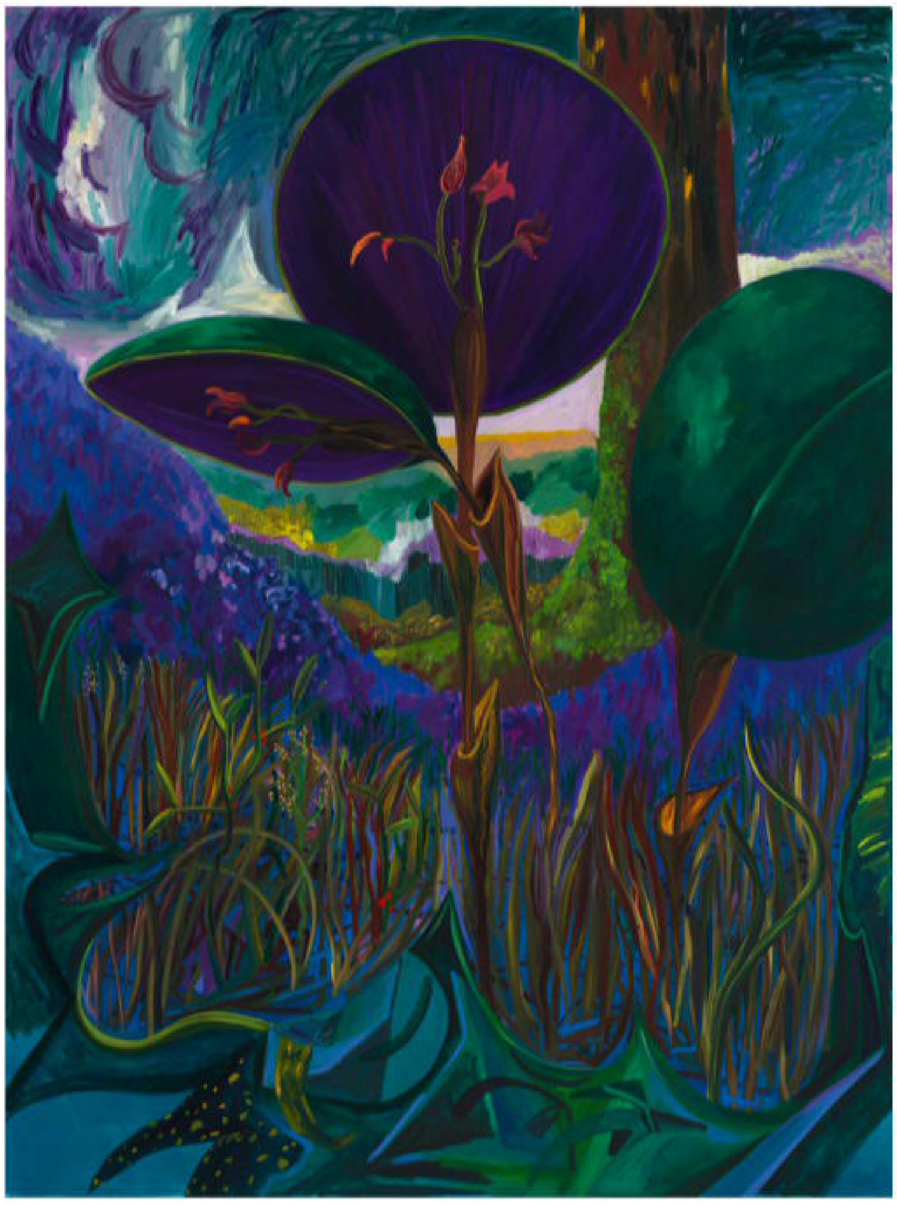
PURE IMAGINATION

Known for her fantastical landscapes, often filled with vibrantly coloured flowers, the Brooklyn-based artist Shara Hughes gets her first UK exhibition at London's Garden Museum this month. Held in partnership with the Pilar Corrias Gallery, it features four, large, site-specific paintings (including Hard Hats *below), in which flowers, such as poppies and orchids, take centre stage emphasising their strength as well as their beauty. 17 May – 5 June.* **thegardenmuseum.co.uk**

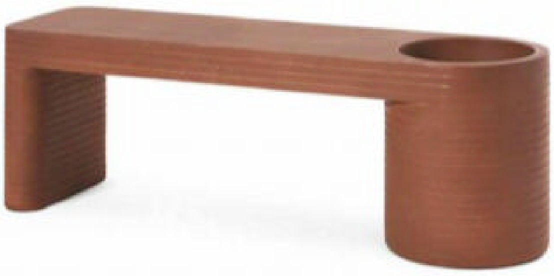


ALL DETAILS CORRECT AT TIME OF PRINT; CHECK GOVERNMENT GUIDLINES

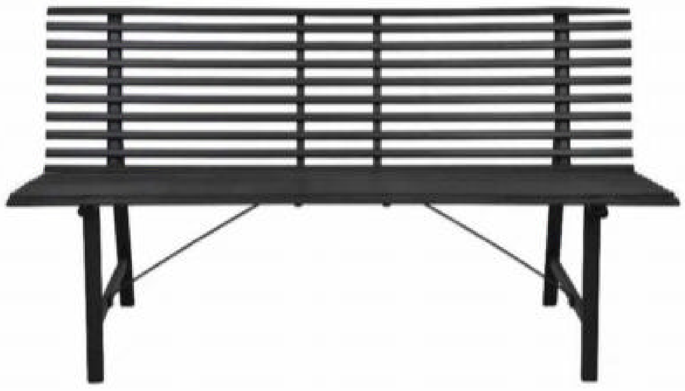
Step into spring

As a taster to its main event in August, *Gardeners' World* Live is launching a new Spring Fair this month (28-30 May), held in the beautiful grounds of Beaulieu in Hampshire. Alongside a selection of high-quality nurseries with plants for sale, there will be talks, a stunning garden display from Hilliers, delicious seasonal produce from BBC *Good Food* market, and the BBC *Gardeners' World* Magazine team will be on hand with gardening tips. Tickets cost £21.50. **bbcgardenersworldlive.com**

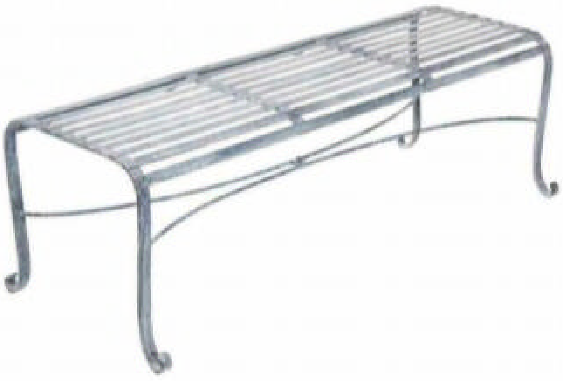
3 FOR THE GARDEN… *BENCHES*



PRACTICAL
Lahan Garden Planter Bench, terracotta,
£299, Made
made.com



CONTEMPORARY
Richmond bench, powder coated steel
£190, Garden Trading
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



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Southwold Garden Bench, 3 seater
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COMPILED BY KATIE BEALE

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MAIN IMAGES STEVE SAYERS

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NUTSCENE
THE IDEAL RAFFIA

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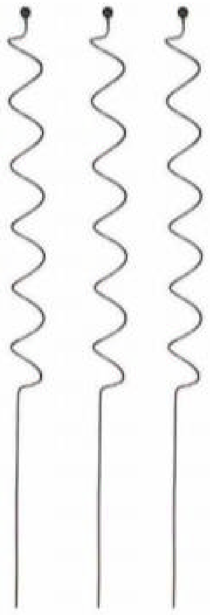

④

1. Mini Kenzan Flower Frog Set, £12, and **Kenzan Long,** 11.5 x3.3cm, £20, 01747 445059, niwaki.com **2. D'Avril Vase Set,** 69x18cm, £207, 020 7692 4001, madeindesign.co.uk **3. Galvanised Florists Buckets,** set of three, £42, 0333 240 1228, sophieconran.com **4. Waterproof Oilskin Apron,** £68, 01328 820699, carriercompany.co.uk **5.Barrington Spiral Plant Support,** 180x10cm, £14 each, 01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk **6. Teardrop Flower Vase,** 16x13cm, £15, gardentrading.co.uk **7. Natural Raffia,** burnt orange, £2.95, 01307 468589, nutscene.com **8. Rattan S-Type Secateurs,** £159, 01747 445059, niwaki.com

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1. Light Wooden Flower Trugs, set of two, £17.95, by Chairworks, notonthehighstreet.com **2. Garden Kneeler,** orange, 44x22cm, £39, 01328 820699, carriercompany.co.uk **3. Paper Flower Sheets,** set of 25, £20.50, ecoflowersupplies.co.uk **4. Florist's Scissors,** colour may vary, £11.95, 0345 092 0283, sarahraven.com **5. Thorn Stripper,** pocket size, £7.99, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com **6. Nature Jute Climbing Net,** 1x3m, £9.99, bakker.com **7. Lobster Pot plant support,** regular, 75x50cm, £210, 01285 706511, muntons.net **8. SHOWA 370 Floreo Gardening Gloves,** mango, £4.99, gardening-gloves.co.uk

SCISSORS IMAGE BY JONATHAN BUCKLEY

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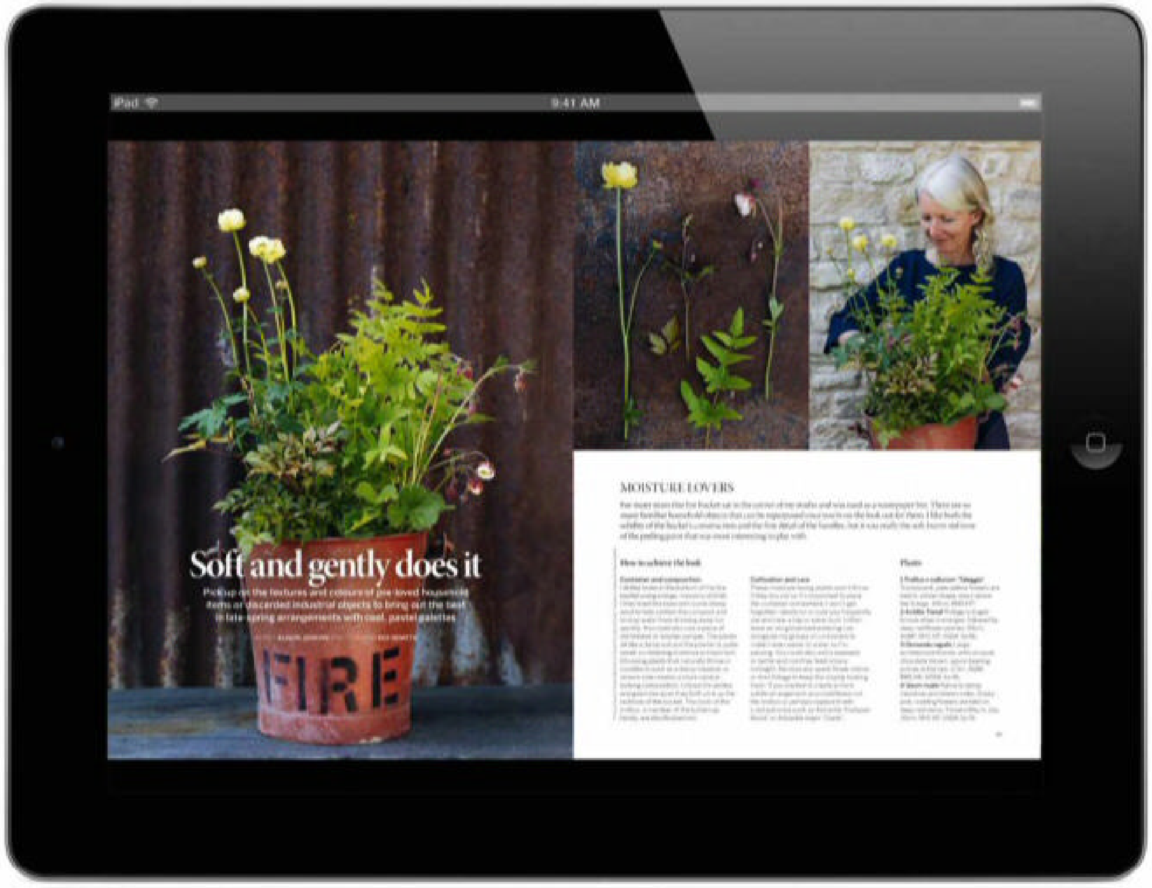
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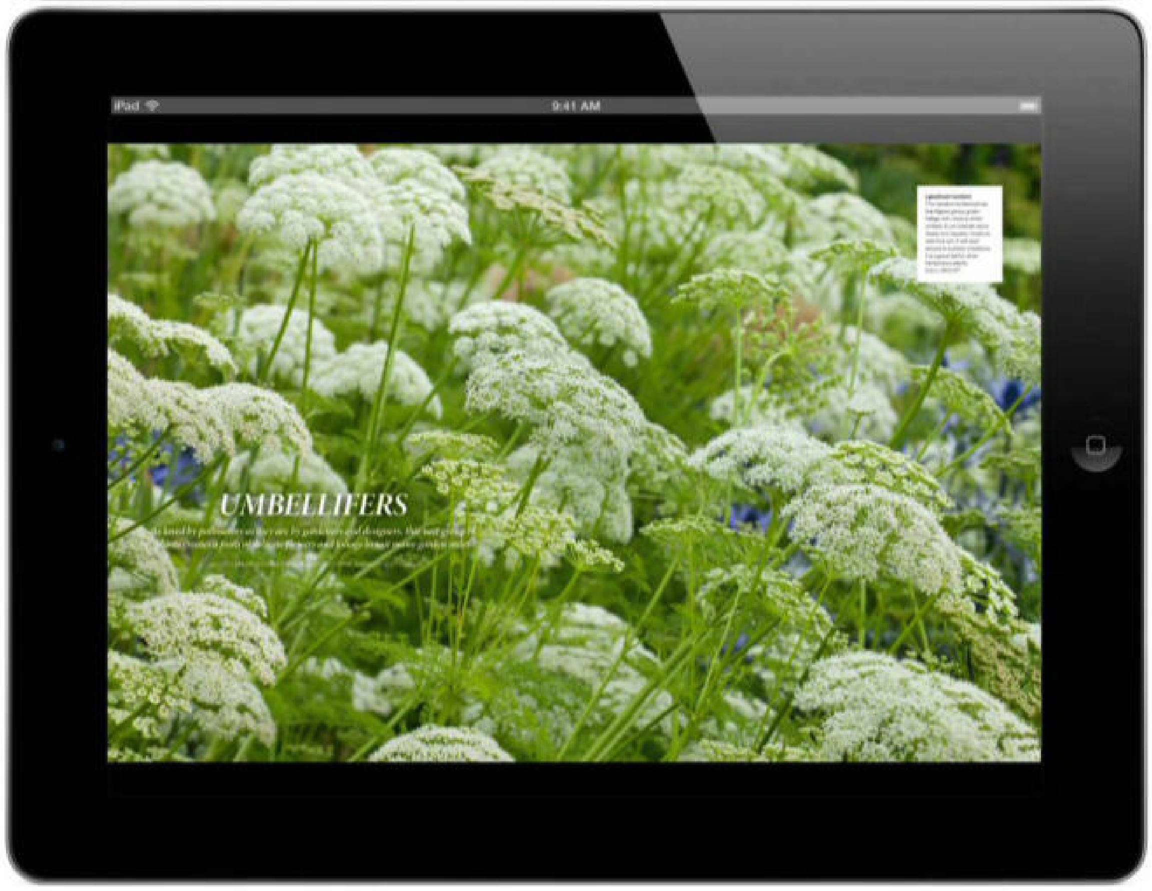
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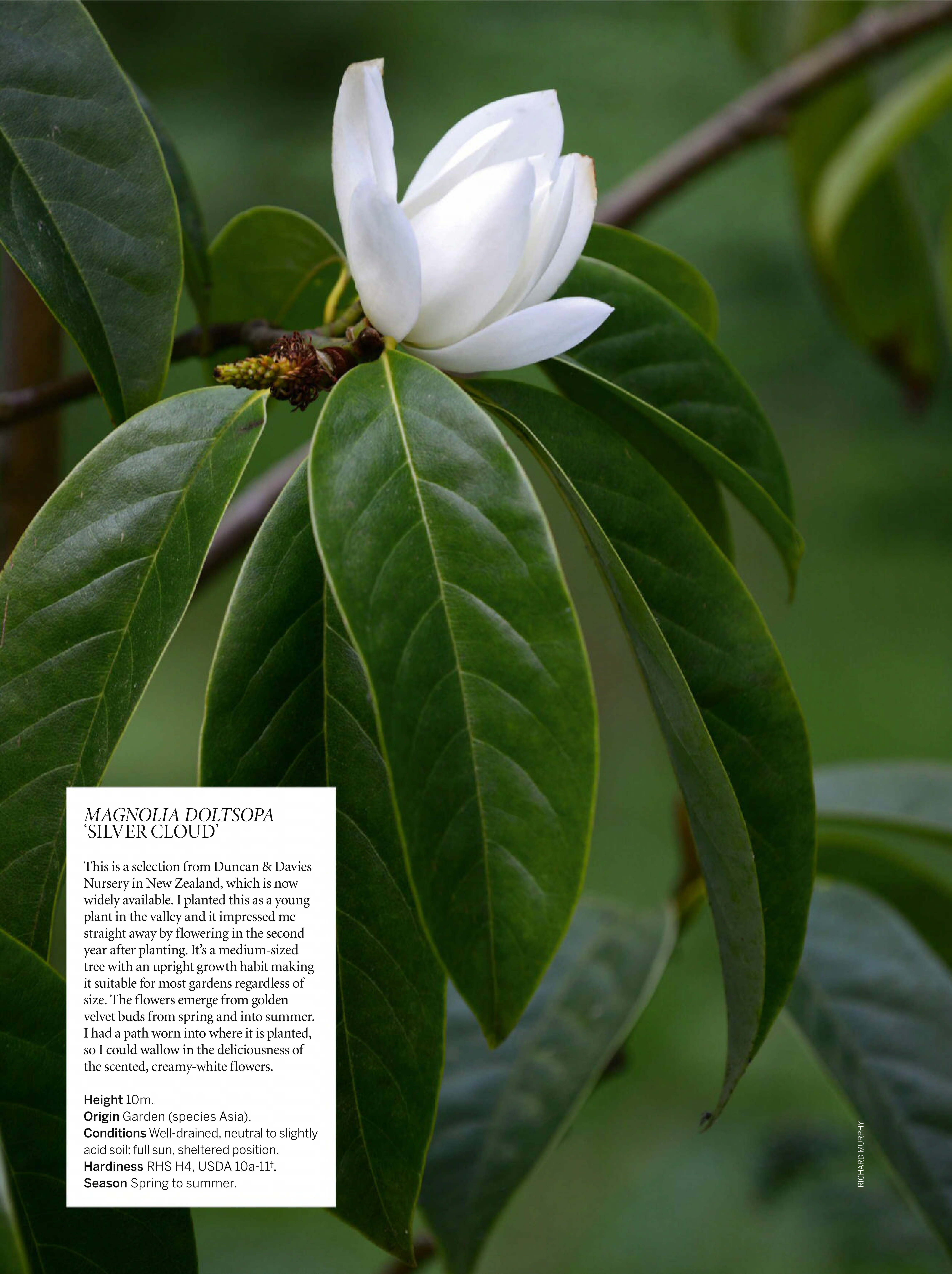


MAGNOLIA DOLTSOPA 'SILVER CLOUD'

This is a selection from Duncan & Davies Nursery in New Zealand, which is now widely available. I planted this as a young plant in the valley and it impressed me straight away by flowering in the second year after planting. It's a medium-sized tree with an upright growth habit making it suitable for most gardens regardless of size. The flowers emerge from golden velvet buds from spring and into summer. I had a path worn into where it is planted, so I could wallow in the deliciousness of the scented, creamy-white flowers.

Height 10m.
Origin Garden (species Asia).
Conditions Well-drained, neutral to slightly acid soil; full sun, sheltered position.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 10a-11[†].
Season Spring to summer.

RICHARD MURPHY

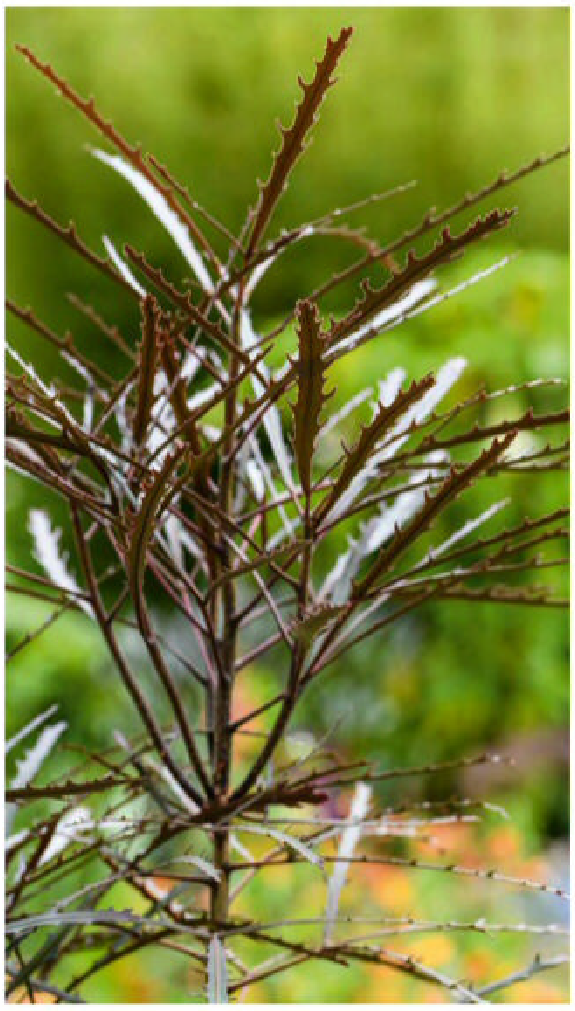
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Jimi Blake is the owner creator of Hunting Brook Gardens. **huntingbrook.com**

May plants

There is a touch of the exotic to Jimi's May selection. From shrubs that offer striking foliage and emerging leaves that have a reptilian-look to a sex-changing Japanese flower

WORDS JIMI BLAKE



JASON INGRAM

PSEUDOPANAX 'CHAINSAW'

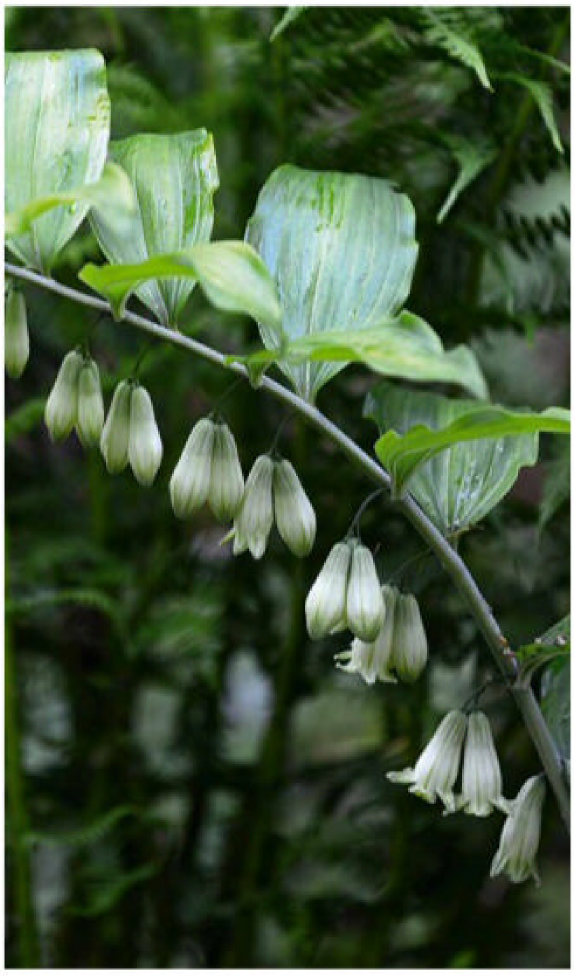
I bought this whacky-looking pseudopanax from a plant fair at Tregrehan Garden in Cornwall, which is home to one of the best woody plant collections in the UK. It's similar to *Pseudopanax crassifolius* with its long rigid leaves resembling the chain of a chainsaw, hence the name. Its growth habit, as with so many *Pseudopanx*, makes it suitable for growing with perennials in a border where light is needed for the plants below. I have finally managed to root some cuttings in pure sand and hopefully some day I will have enough to plant a grove of them in the valley.

Height 3m.
Origin Garden (species New Zealand).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Year round.

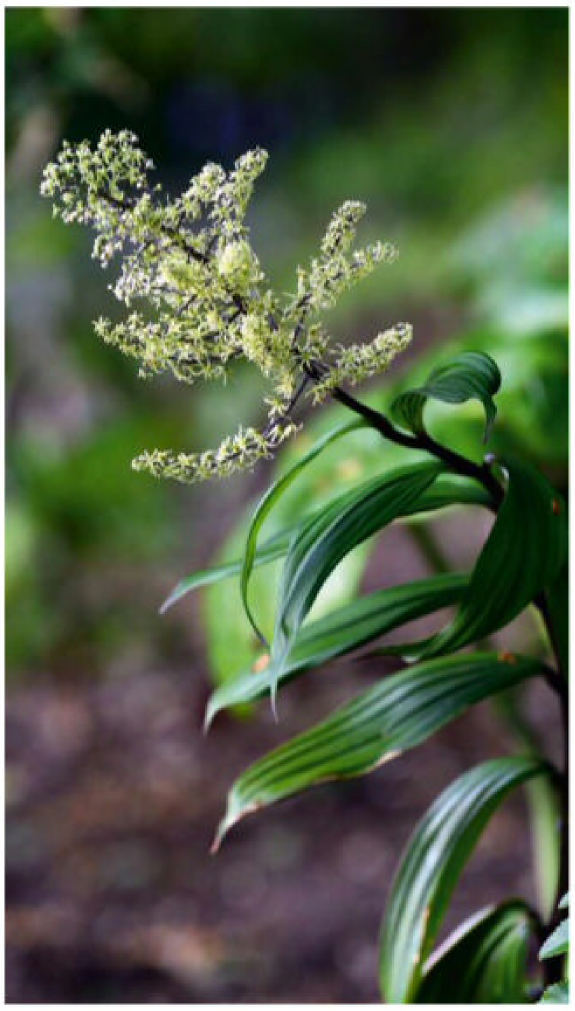
POLYGONATUM FALCATUM

This is one of the many plants in the Asparagaceae family that I grow and collect. This particular species stands out from the rest for its arching stems and larger than usual, white and green striped, tubular flowers. These flowers are followed by black berries. I am growing these in my new woodland beds, which are slightly raised and so help to make the flowers more visible. In recent years many new species of *Polygonatum* have been found in the wild and many of these are definitely worth growing. This one is slow to bulk up, but can be propagated by division as it matures.

Height 1.5-2m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Fertile, humus-rich soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season April to September.



JIMI BLAKE



RICHARD MURPHY

MAIANTHEMUM TATSIENENSE

Yet another beautiful member of the Asparagaceae family and only recently making its way on to the gardening scene. It emerges in my woodland garden in spring with arching stems, pleated leaves and star-like, yellow-green flowers on panicles. These are followed by orange berries in late summer and autumn. It's been slow to bulk up for me, but well worth the wait. I have underplanted it with two beautiful green and white snowdrops, *Galanthus* 'Trumps' and *G.* 'Jade', followed by *Primula* 'Wanda'.

Height 50cm-1m.
Origin China, Bhutan, India, northern Myanmar.
Conditions Moist, humus-rich soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season Spring to summer.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

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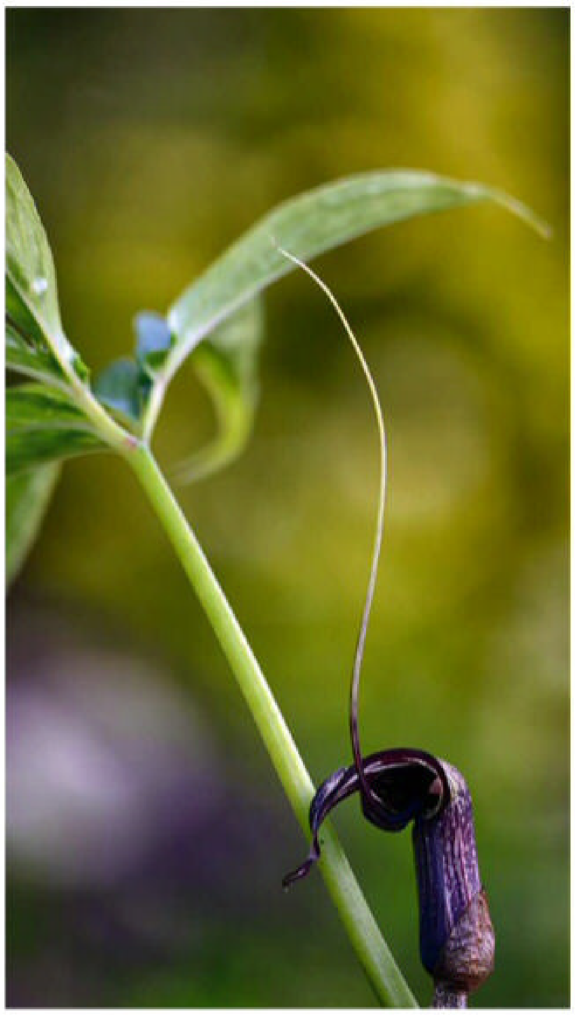
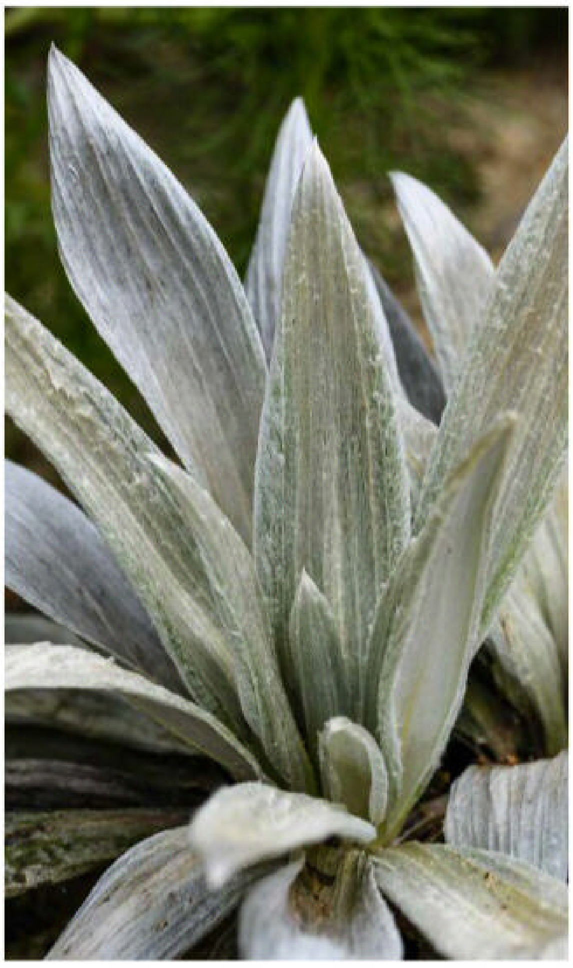
> Like many people, I made the mistake of thinking celmisias more of a Mediterranean plant until I saw them growing in New Zealand

ARISAEMA KIUSHIANUM

I love ariseamas, but I have lost many over the years, thanks to my wet cold winters. This is one of the easiest arisaemas, although it took about four years from growing from seed for it to flower for me. It has a single leaf stem and purple-veined, green flowers below the leaf in May. The flowers can change sex from year to year depending on how healthy and vigorous the plant is that year. How fabulous is that! The key to growing is to provide them with excellent drainage and if your garden is too wet in winter, dig up the tubers, pot them up, and keep them fairly dry in a frost-free, cool place for the winter.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Rich wood soil with excellent drainage; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season May.


RICHARD MURPHY


JASON INGRAM

CELMISIA 'DAVID SHACKLETON'

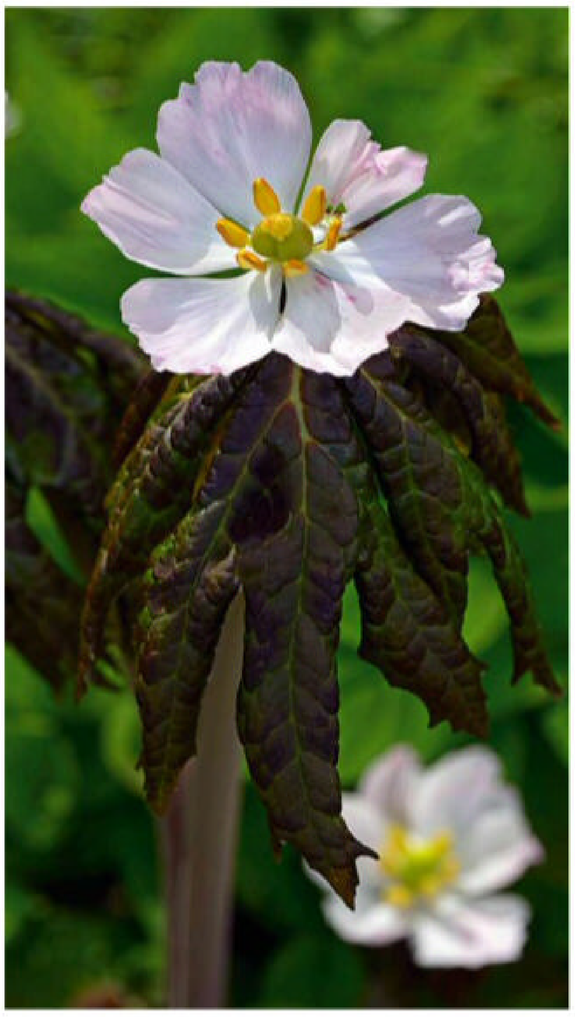
A plant gifted to me many years ago from the head gardener of Beech Park near Dublin, where it was first grown. In common with many people I made the mistake of thinking celmisias were more of a Mediterranean plant until I saw them growing in an area called Arthur's Pass in New Zealand when I realised that they actually need a cool, moist climate similar to what I have at Hunting Brook. This celmisia has sword-like, pure-silver leaves and daisy-like white flowers. I propagate this from division in spring and replant in groups.

Height 20cm.
Origin Garden.
Conditions Moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season Year round.

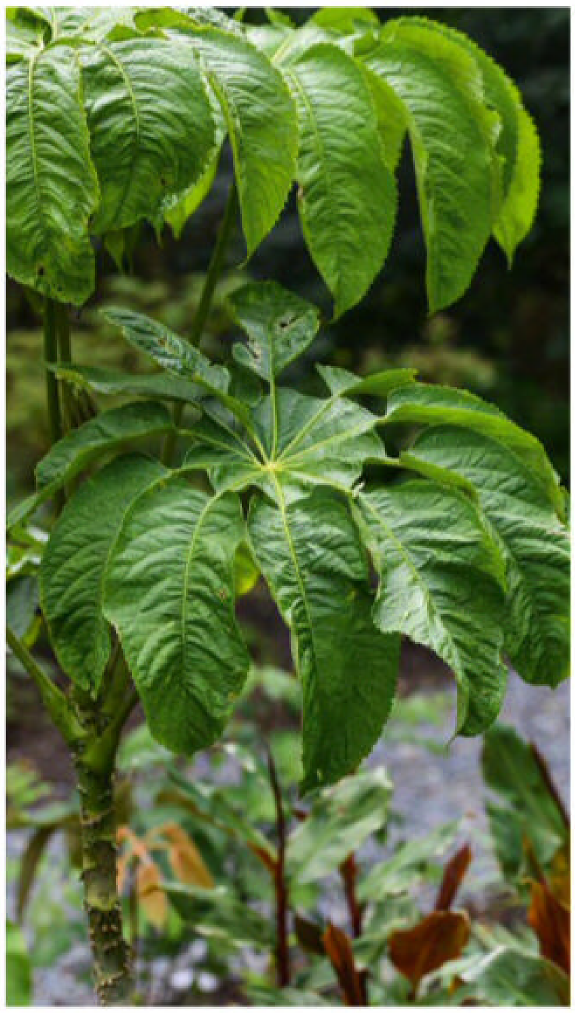
SINOPODOPHYLLUM HEXANDRUM VAR. *EMODI* 'MAJUS'

Watching this plant, with its mottled foliage that resembles an old toad, emerge from out of the soil in my woodland garden in spring is so exciting. It grows up on a stem over a few weeks with delicate soft pink flowers sitting above each leaf for a few days, although the main reason I grow this is for its dramatic, umbrella-like leaves.Then in in mid to late summer it forms large, attractive, egg-shaped red fruit, which I collect, clean thoroughly, and sow fresh in order to propagate new plants.

Height 70cm.
Origin Himalayas.
Conditions Humus-rich soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Spring to summer.


RICHARD MURPHY

> *Brassaiopsis ciliata* is definitely one of the funkiest foliage plants I grow. It's tender but with some plants the effort of protecting them in winter is worth it



JASON INGRAM

BRASSAIOPSIS CILIATA

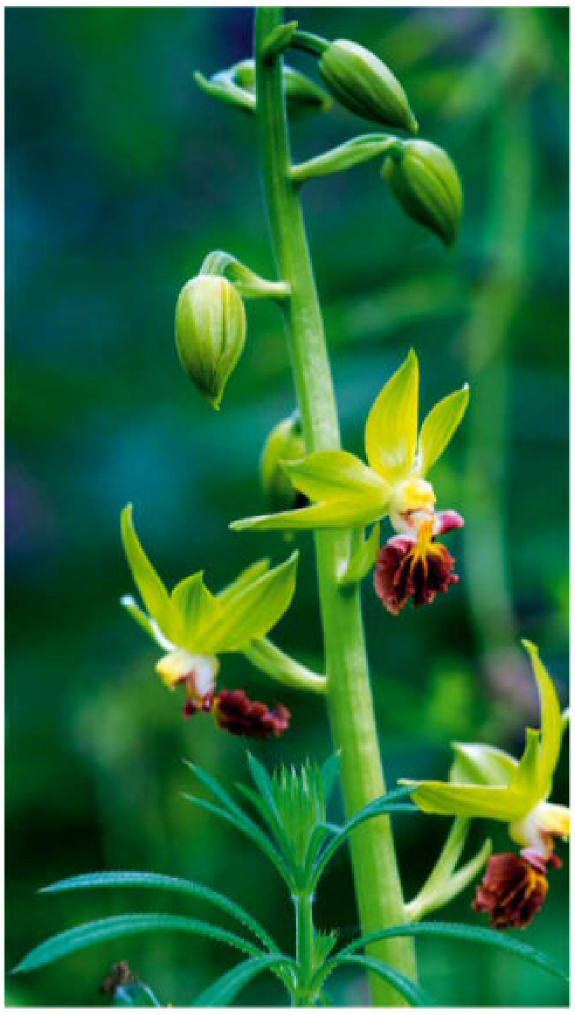
This is definitely one of the most dramatic and funky foliage plants that I grow at Hunting Book, with its massive palmate leaves and beautiful, silver, new growth. I remember the first *Brassaiopsis* I saw was on a plant hunting expedition many years ago in China. Unfortunately, there was no seed on it but the image of its architectural leaves never left me. *Brassaiopsis* is tender but with some plants the effort of protecting them in winter is worth it. I dig it up before first frost and bring it into the house for the winter where I can enjoy its spectacular leaves.

Height 10m in its native habitat.
Origin China, Nepal, southeast Asia.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun and protection from cold winds.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season All year.

CALANTHE TRICARINATA

I've always veered away from hardy orchids not just because of their price but also because of the danger of killing them. But this one has grown in my woodland garden for the past 15 years and during that time it has survived temperatures as low as -15°C. It stays evergreen but I cut back the pleated leaves in spring to make the flowers more visible. The beautiful flowers are a yellowish green with a brown lip. After flowering, the new pleated leaves grow up and look fantastic through the rest of the year. I've had good success propagating this by division in autumn.

Height 35cm.
Origin Northern Pakistan to temperate east Asia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness USDA 6a-9b.
Season April to May.



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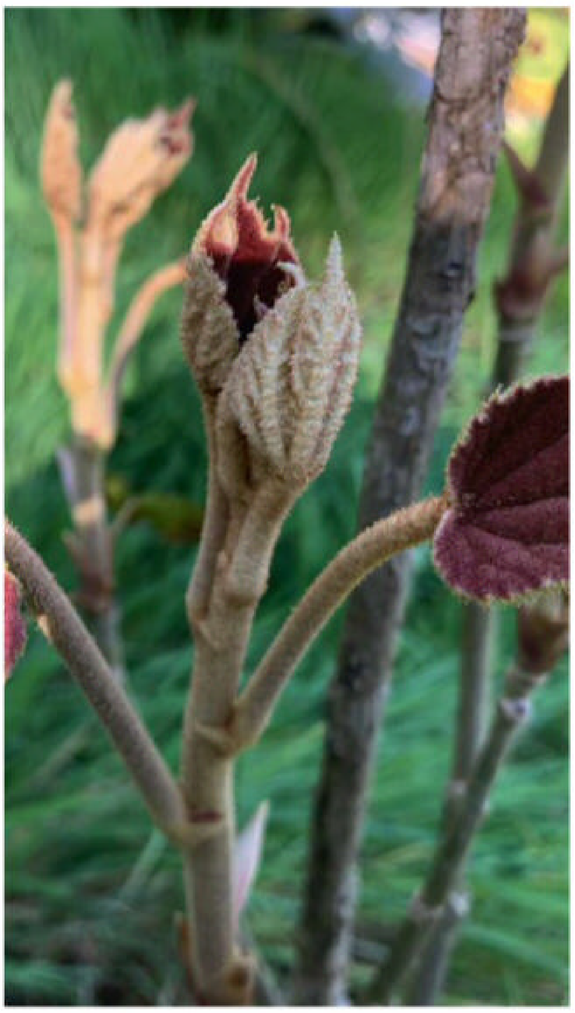

JIMI BLAKE

MERRILLIOPANAX ALPINUS

This is another member of the Araliaceae family that deserves to be more widely grown in cultivation. I am indebted to the wonderful Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones at Crûg Farm Plants in north Wales for introducing me to this funky foliage plant. It is a large shrub or small tree with three lobed leaves, followed by black-purple fruit similar to those on ivy. I have grown this for the past five years in the valley in Hunting Brook where it is growing extremely slowly but seems very happy.

Height 6-7m.
Origin China, northern India, Nepal, Myanmar.
Conditions Well-drained; humus-rich soil; needs a sheltered sunny spot.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Spring to autumn.

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SPECKLED HOUND
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GROWING PAINS

As the days start to get much longer and warmer, Aaron's biggest problem is finding space for all his seedlings, but he still finds time to sow seeds for climbing beans and has a ball choosing pumpkins

WORDS AARON BERTELSEN ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

May in the south of England is the most enchanting month. Sadly, I cannot relax and enjoy it. I am far too busy worrying about space, or rather the lack of it. This is the month when seedlings are jostling for position in the glasshouse and cold frames, and the temptation can be strong to plant them out too soon, just to get them out of the way.

Even now, with the days growing longer and the sun gaining strength, the nights can be chilly. Plants grown under glass must be hardened off by gradually increasing their exposure to the elements before they can be planted out. Start by putting them outside during the day and bringing them back in at night. Once you have done this for three days or so you can graduate on to leaving them out all night in a sheltered spot. By this time they should be ready to plant out, although crops such as beans will still be grateful for a covering of horticultural fleece if the temperature looks likely to dip below 7°C.

What to sow

I love growing climbing beans. Some of my favourite cultivars include 'Blue Lake Stringless', 'Monte Gusto', 'Cobra', and the marvellously named 'Lazy Housewife'. With their different-coloured blossoms they bring some visual interest to the kitchen garden. They don't take up much space, are easy to grow, and yield generous crops. It is worth waiting until May to sow them as they do much better in warm weather. Start them off inside and by the time you have good-sized plants to put out, the danger of cold nights should have passed. I sow into extra deep plug trays, one seed per plug. These give the plants enough room to grow and the extra bit of space means they won't come to any harm if the weather turns cold and you have to wait before planting out. Keep moist, but be careful to avoid overwatering as beans are prone to rotting off. While they're growing, prepare the supports, which need to be good and sturdy. I use a combination of poles and good strong brushwood pea sticks, using tarred twine to pull the pea sticks together into a kind of tepee shape. When you plant out, water well (and keep watering) and be ready with the organic slug pellets.

Rouge Vif D'Etampes.

What to plant out

In New Zealand, we ate pumpkin all the time, so it was a shock to come to the UK and find them relatively scarce. Fortunately, that has changed, but as ever, the best way to get what you want is to grow it yourself. Good cultivars include 'Jarrahdale' with its stunning blue-grey skin and deep orange flesh, 'Speckled Hound' with its streaky pastel skin and the classic Cinderella pumpkin, 'Rouge Vif d'Etampes'. The key to a good crop is soil preparation. This is a hungry crop, so make sure you add plenty of farmyard manure or good compost (or grow them on the heap itself). Good-sized plants ready to go out by the end of May will have time to grow and ripen before first frosts. Properly ripe pumpkins will have a tougher skin, which means you can store them for longer and eat them throughout the winter. Apart from slugs, the only real problem with pumpkins is mosaic virus, where the leaves develop yellow mottling. If this happens, there is nothing for it but to pull the plants out and discard them.

What to harvest

It is a great day for me when the new season's beetroot is ready to harvest. I have a great love of this vegetable and over the years have enjoyed finding different ways to use it in the kitchen but when the roots are tender and young it is hard to think of anything better than grating them just as they are (don't wear a white shirt for this part of the process), and mixing in the juice of a lemon, olive oil, salt, pepper and maybe a handful of pumpkin seeds. Deliciously fresh, it is the perfect way to convert those for whom beetroot is still tied in to painful memories of school dinners. I know that for some the flavour is simply too earthy. Peeling them can help with this, although be aware that in doing so you are also removing valuable nutrients that sit just under the skin.

You can find Aaron's recipe for beetroot bake with parmesan at **gardensillustrated.com/recipes**

Jobs for May

If you haven't done so already, sow pumpkins and courgettes before the middle of the month to give crops a chance of maturing before the end of the growing season. Peas, beans and sweetcorn should also be under way by now.

This is also the time to sow winter brassicas including the king of them all, kale. I leave mine to grow over the summer and only start eating it after the first frost, when the sugar levels have risen and it is at its best and sweetest.

Get supports in place for climbing beans and peas – tall pea sticks are ideal, or use netting stretched between some strong poles – before you plant out the seedlings.

Similarly, tomato plants will need a good strong support – I use chestnut stakes, at least 1.5m high. Get them in place now, before the plants are in the ground. You risk damaging the young roots if you do it the other way round.

Regular small sowings of beetroot and salad crops will ensure a succession throughout the summer. I sow a few seeds every three to four weeks.

Crops that are starting to put on growth, particularly those in pots and those with large leaves such as Swiss chard, spinach and rhubarb, will benefit from a good feed this month. I like to use liquid seaweed or tomato food – despite its name, this is a great all-round fertiliser.

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LUCY HART

The historic, public, Fulham Palace Garden has a dedicated head gardener in Lucy, who's worked there for ten years with a focus on accessibility and sustainability

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory From the age of 13, I worked Saturdays at a local small holding growing seasonal bedding plants, initially just to save up for a pair of jeans. But it was here I discovered my utter love and passion for plants and continued on to more formal training.

First plant love I'll never forget seeing my first bee orchid in flower in the beautiful limestone pavement habitats of the Burren in western Ireland. My obsession for terrestrial orchids developed over the years and on a trip to South Africa I came across a stand of *Disa uniflora* by a stream on Table Mountain. The beauty and natural landscapes of terrestrial orchids are a lure but also the cleverness of their life cycles, their relationship with fungi and ultimately how hard they are to grow that makes them so desirable.

Who has inspired your career When I started the job as head gardener at Fulham Palace I reached out to some gardening marvels to get me going. I visited Sarah Wain at West Dean (before her retirement) and she got down to the nitty gritty of how to succeed – by keeping your tool and store sheds tidy. Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter filled my head with tips and tricks on where to start – if in doubt plant potatoes because they will sort out any compaction. Joseph Atkins, head gardener at Aberglasney gave me fantastic advice on how to work with trustees and stakeholders and Debs Goodenough, head gardener at Highgrove reassured me not to worry about getting everything sorted at once. I am so grateful to these people for sharing their expertise and knowledge.

Worthwhile tips for every gardener Do hand watering rather than using a sprinkler or automated irrigation– it saves water and you get to check in with the plant and see how its doing.

Favourite 'weed' you're happy to have in the garden? Green alkanet, *Pentaglottis sempervirens*. We have a mound, which I'm ashamed to say I regarded as a weedy patch when I first started, despite loving the piercing blue flowers, but a few years ago I walked past the patch, stood still for a moment and just watched, and counted at least nine different species of wild bee, it was incredible. We now strive to conserve areas like this at Fulham Palace and are very much about encouraging biodiversity and creating or conserving habitats for wildlife.

Contact lucy.hart@fulhampalace.org. Fulham Palace is hosting The Green Meet on 2 May to explore biodiversity and the garden's approach to climate change, fulhampalace.org

> I counted at least nine different species of wild bee on our patch of green alkanet – it was incredible

IN BRIEF

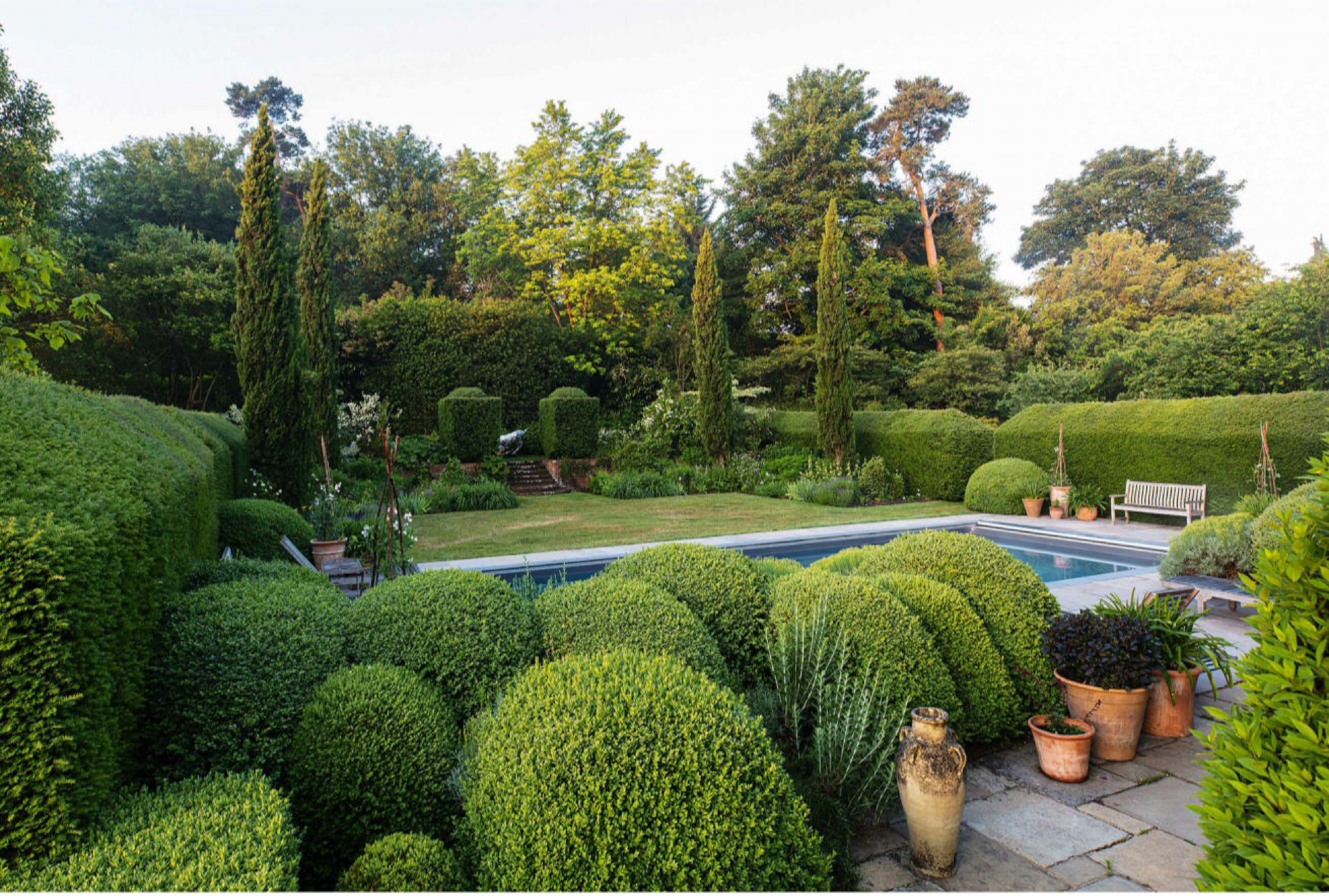
Name Pie Corner.
What Private garden designed to complement a modern classical house, with formal pool garden and woodland walk.
Where Hertfordshire.
Size Four acres.
Soil Various.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

To the north of the house, crisp topiary shapes on the terrace contrast with more relaxed planting around the pond, including generous clumps of rosemary and *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'. The beds are filled with masses of *Allium cristophii* and the beautiful, lavender-coloured *Geranium* 'Philippe Vapelle'.

ONE STEP AT A TIME

On her journey from novice gardener to professional designer, Bella Stuart-Smith has created a multifaceted, ever-evolving garden at her home in Hertfordshire

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**



Starting from scratch here was rather daunting. I had done next to no gardening before we arrived, but everyone helped with initial ideas

Wandering round Pie Corner on an early summer's day, slanting sun highlights a collection of quirky topiary and formal hedges. Bees buzz lazily from one mound of lavender to the next, past beds fizzing with geraniums and alliums, foxgloves and salvias. It is all the work of Bella Stuart-Smith, who started with the ultimate blank canvas – no garden, no house – and went on to create a perfect country estate in miniature.

When Bella and her lawyer husband Jeremy were drawn away from London with two small children and the promise of building a new home on inherited land, they were joining a very exclusive community. Most of Jeremy's family live in this magical corner of Hertfordshire and, as their surname suggests, they are all exceptional gardeners.

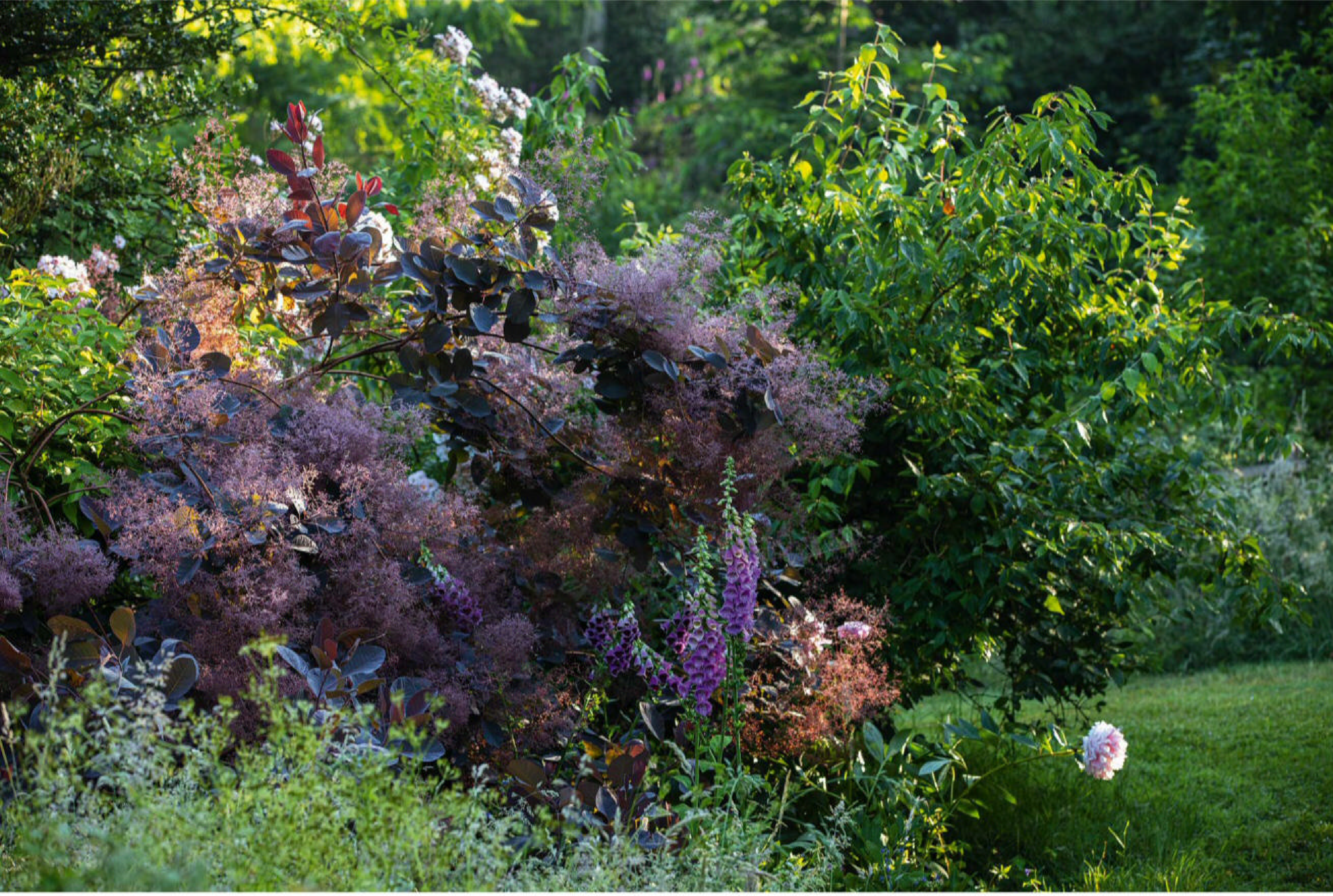
Brother-in-law Tom's world-famous Barn Garden is just down the lane, and Serge Hill, long-time home of Tom and Jeremy's parents but now occupied by their sister Kate, can just be glimpsed from Bella's drawing-room windows.

"Starting from scratch here was rather daunting," says Bella. "I had done next to no gardening before we arrived, but everyone was terribly nice and helped with initial design ideas and structures."

The first step, in 1988, was to demolish two derelict cottages and fill their existing compact footprint with a new house. Bella and Jeremy commissioned "a minimalist cube in the tradition of Sir John Soane", with terraces on three sides, taking in glorious views over rolling countryside to the east. "We put in some hedges and planted a couple of ▷

Above In the south-facing pool garden, hummocks of clipped box form a cloud-pruned hedge along the terrace. At the end furthest from the house, four *Cupressus sempervirens* 'Pyramidalis' and more topiary frame semi-circular steps leading up to a grass path where the sculpture of a deer appears to be running to safety.

Right Bella has a fondness for purple, blue and lavender flowers, showcased to great effect in this deep bed where she has combined *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna', various penstemons and *Amsonia orientalis* with lime-green *Alchemilla mollis* and the pale-pink pompoms of *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Shirley Temple'.



There was no grand plan, even now I'm always changing things around. Beds are constantly being tweaked, but there are unifying details

▷ borders, so it didn't feel quite so stark, but by that point we had pretty much run out of money and the garden didn't get much attention for a while."

As her family gradually grew from two to four children, Bella began adding to her garden, instinctively working out from the house as time and resources allowed. "There was no grand plan, even now I'm always changing things around, but there are unifying details. I have a lot of blue- and lavender-coloured flowers, partly because I love them, but also because I'm thrifty, so I propagate from what I have and end up with lots of the same things to spread around."

The topiary pieces on the terraces started out as low hedging. In time they were replaced by a formal rectangular pool, gravel paths, mounds of rosemary and lavender, and large beds stuffed with *Euphorbia palustris*, *Geranium* 'Philippe Vapelle' and masses of peonies, which look wonderful at this time of year.

Today, the yew and hornbeam hedges have a mature heft, anchoring the wisteria-cloaked house to its setting and defining the different sections of this now extensive garden. To the east of the house, the hedges flank a rough lawn (soon to be seeded with wildflowers) and frame the view past a flock of black Hebridean sheep to a huge wellingtonia, growing in the garden at Serge Hill, which pokes incongruously above a distant stand of native woodland.

To the south of the house is a smaller, more formal garden with a swimming pool framed by low, cloud-pruned hedges. Four *Cupressus sempervirens* 'Pyramidalis' have anchored this garden for decades, but two large beds framing semi-circular steps at the far end of this area are being constantly tweaked and enlarged.

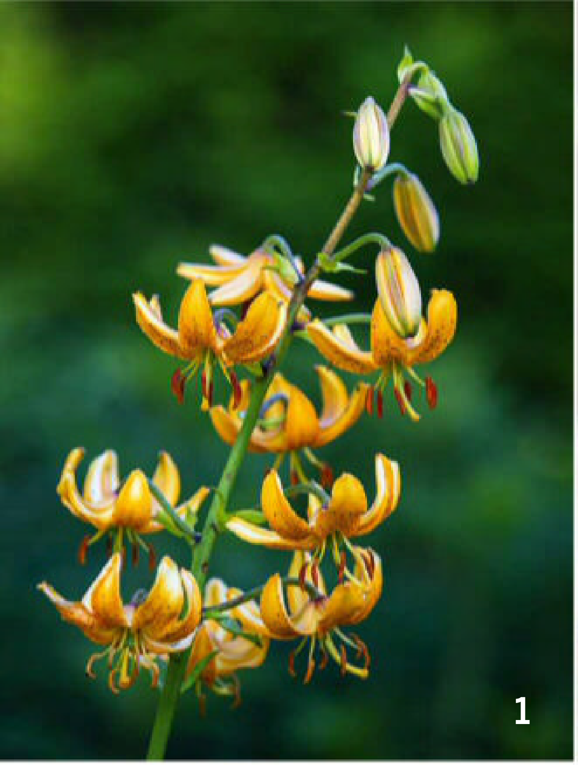
"I can't help it," says Bella. "Whenever I have the space and time I find myself adding extras." As well as enlarging existing beds, over the years she has steadily added whole ▷

To continue turn to page 46

Opposite, top The sheltered Gravel Garden includes *Melianthus major* with its grey-green pinnate leaves, the crimson flowerheads of *Knautia macedonica* and bold clumps of golden-yellow *Allium flavum*. The grass *Stipa tenuissima* self-seeds happily and must be controlled.

Opposite, bottom Against a backdrop of clipped box and columns of mature cypress, the ever-enlarging beds in the Swimming Pool Garden are filled with lavender and the deep-purple *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht', which contrasts with zingy, yellow *Achillea* 'Moonshine' and the pale daisies of *Cephalaria gigantea*, waving on their wiry stems.

Above Roses in the Dell Walk include *Rosa* 'The Garland', its pretty, soft pink echoed by the flouncy pompoms of *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Festiva Maxima'. The purple-leaved smoke bush, *Cotinus* 'Grace' forms a harmonious link between the two, enlivened by violet foxgloves.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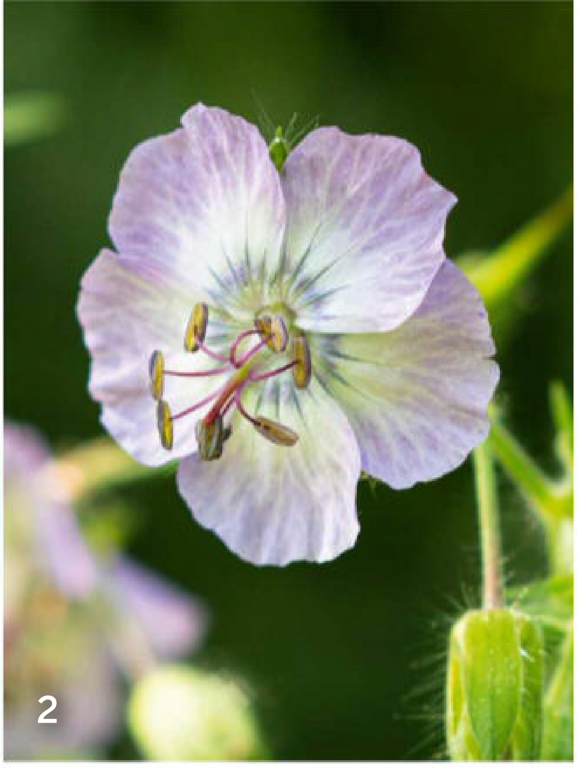
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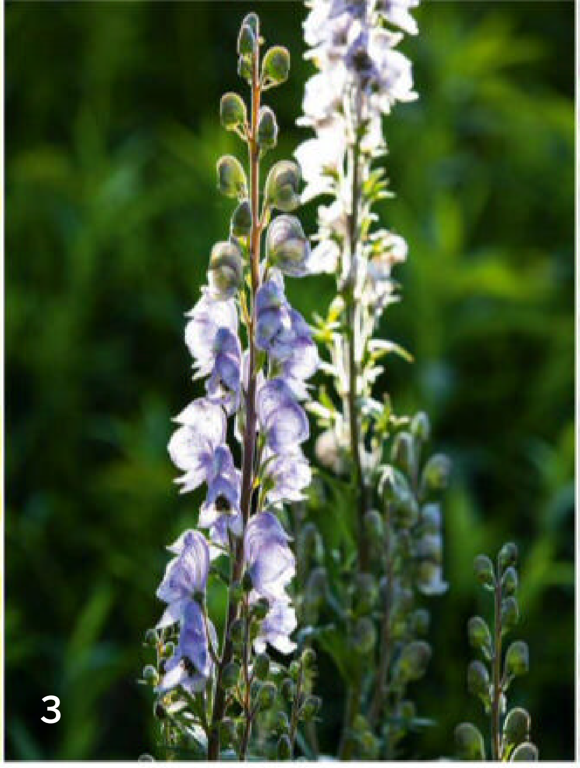
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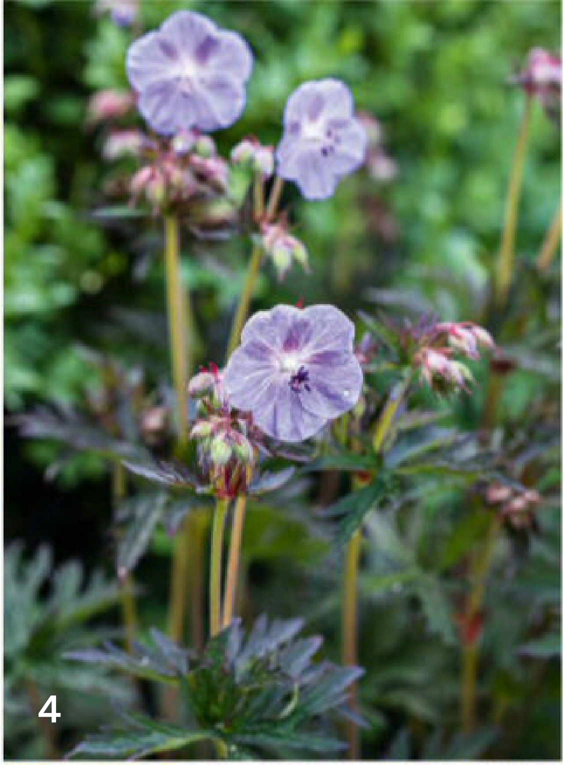
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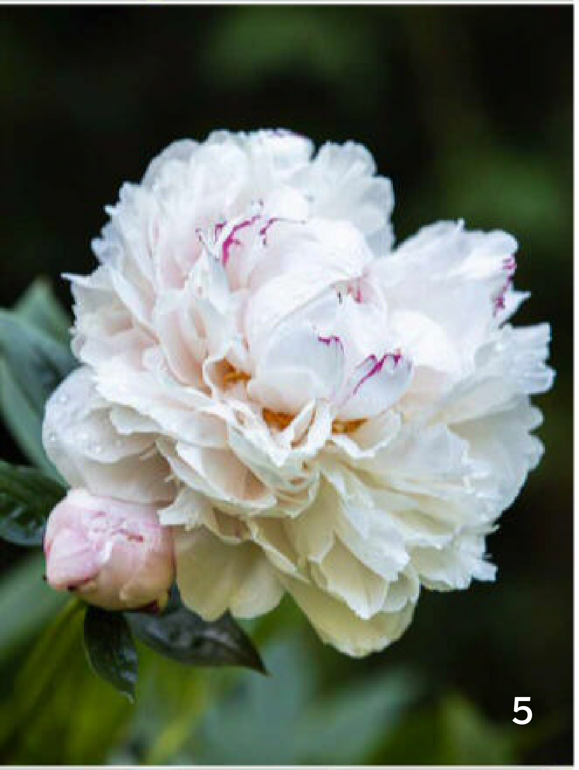
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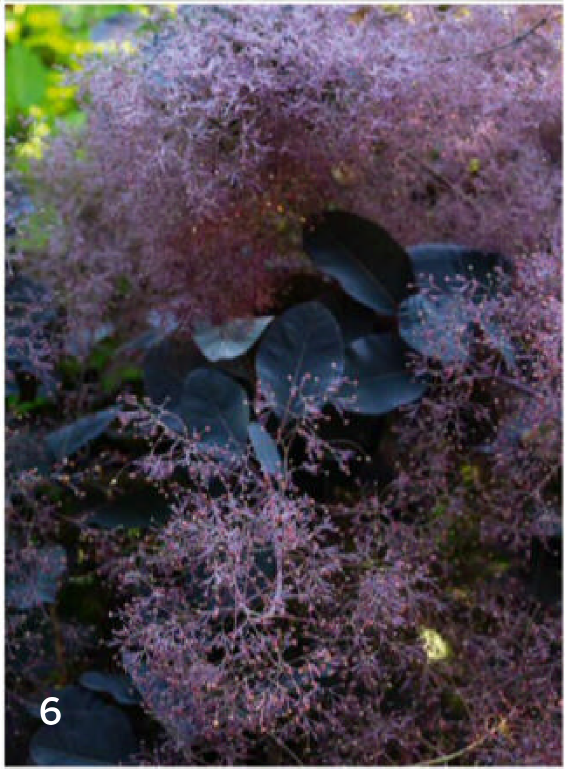
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12 KEY PLANTS

1 *Lilium hansonii*
Bella uses this lily to follow on from 'Ballerina' tulips, to provide a continuation of orange before the hotter colours of July get going. 1.2m. RHS H6[†].

2 *Geranium phaeum* var. *lividum* 'Majus'
Bella loves the pale-lavender flowers of this delicate geranium. It is tolerant of shade, flowers abundantly, and is extremely useful on a dry bank in front of shrubs. RHS H7.

3 *Aconitum* 'Stainless Steel'
With its wonderful, steely-blue flowers, this picks up the colour of a nearby *Amsonia* and looks lovely with the acid green of euphorbias or *Alchemilla mollis*. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7.

4 *Geranium pratense* 'Midnight Reiter'
A cultivar that Bella values for the striking markings on its dark leaves. She acquired it from a local GP-turned-nurseryman, via her local garden society. 50cm. RHS H7.

5 *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Festiva Maxima'
An old cultivar with enormous double flowers that have a delicious fragrance and will grow in sun or partial shade provided the soil is rich and well drained. 95cm. AGM. RHS H6.

6 *Cotinus* 'Grace'
A smoke bush that does best in a wild space. Bella loves its combination of deep-purple foliage and the frothing 'smoke' of its summer flowers. 8m. RHS H5.

7 *Verbascum* 'Petra'
This came from a Chelsea garden Bella designed with other students in 2004 as part of her design course. She has increased its stock to include it in many parts of the garden. 75cm.

8 *Cephalaria gigantea*
Bella finds this plant so reliable and generous. Its pale-yellow daisies are a wonderful way to lighten the backdrop of an evergreen hedge. 2m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

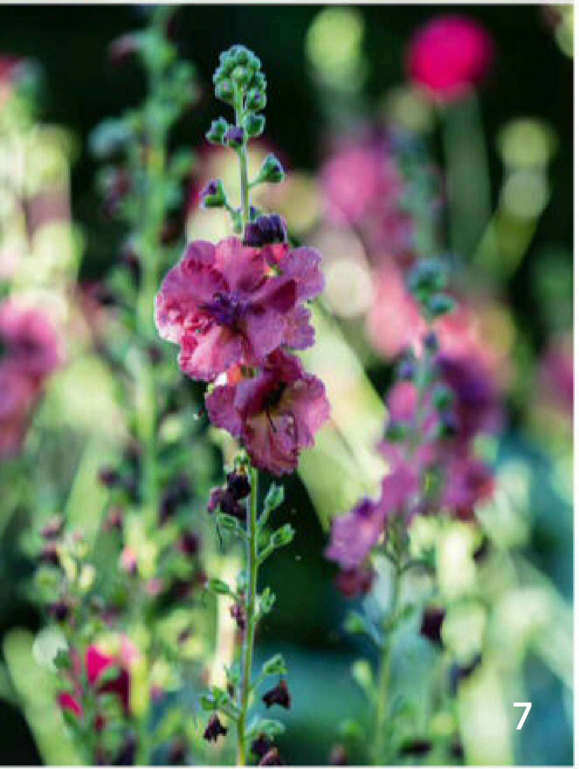
9 *Stipa tenuissima*
A pretty grass that will soften any planting. It seeds itself generously, but is easy to control if you pull up the strays regularly. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

10 *Lilium martagon*
A happy accident, this was supposed to be *Lilium hansonii* but was muddled by the supplier. Bella keeps a sharp eye out to protect it from lily beetles. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

11 *Allium flavum*
A lovely, pale-yellow alternative to the more usual purple alliums, which grows happily in the sharp drainage of Pie Corner's Gravel Garden. 40cm. AGM. RHS H5.

12 *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Kokuryu'
Slow to get going, and definitely needs sharp drainage in this garden, but it is wonderful when it flowers, and makes a smart, grassy edge to paving. 20cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†]Hardiness ratings given where available.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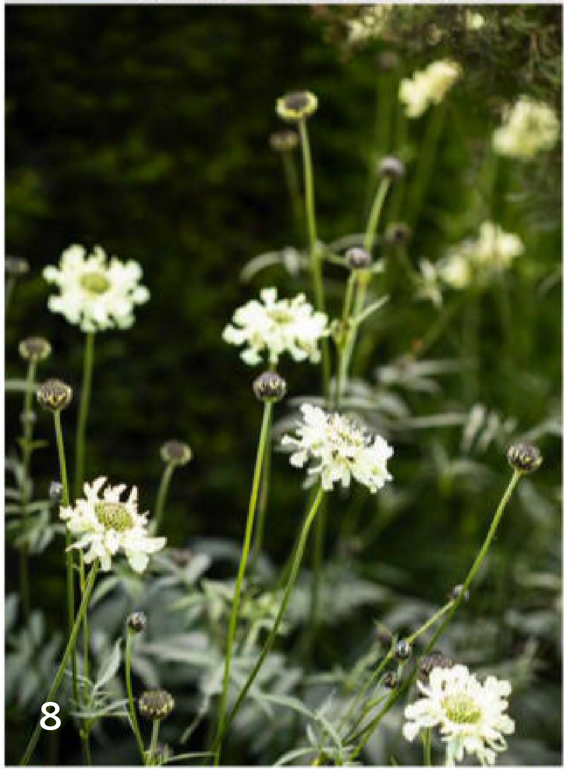
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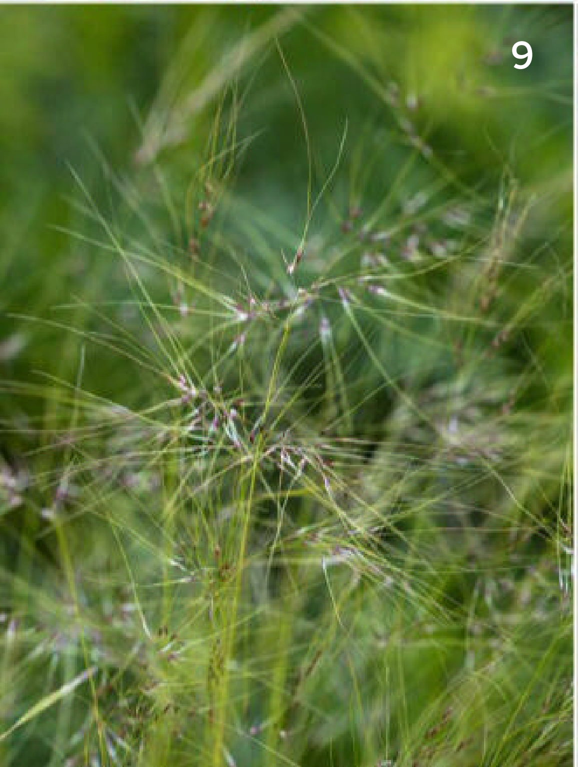
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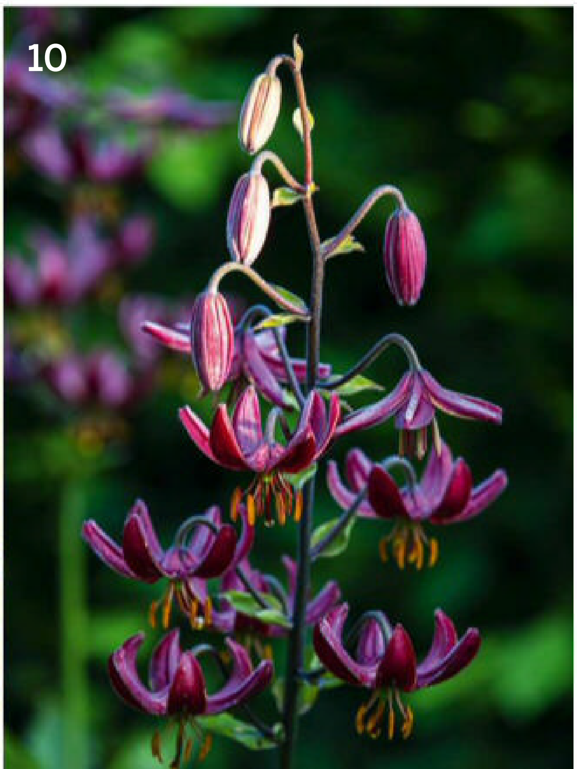
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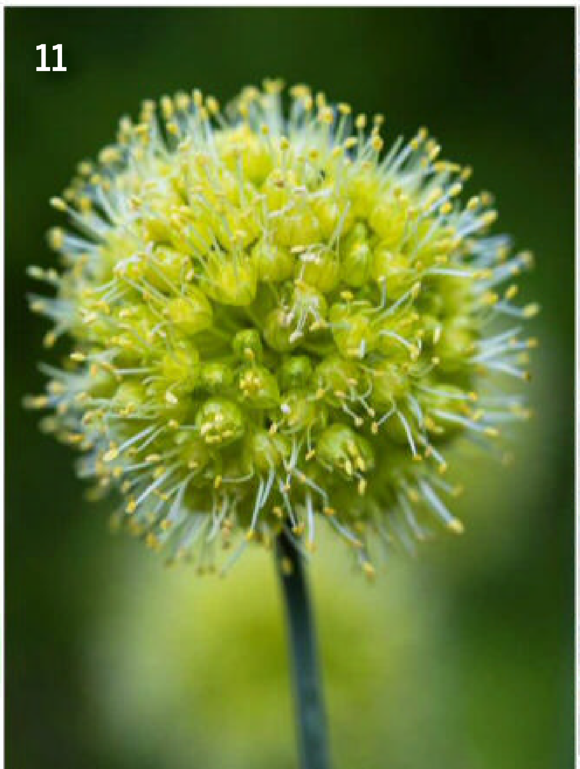
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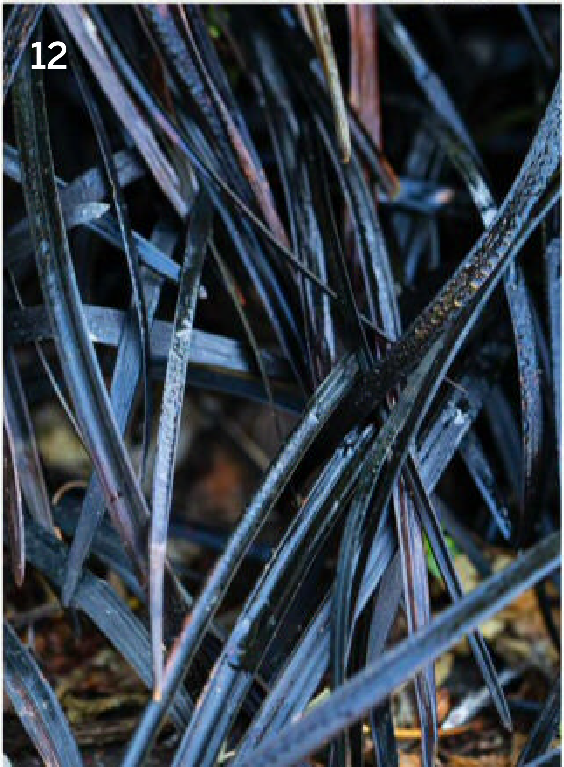
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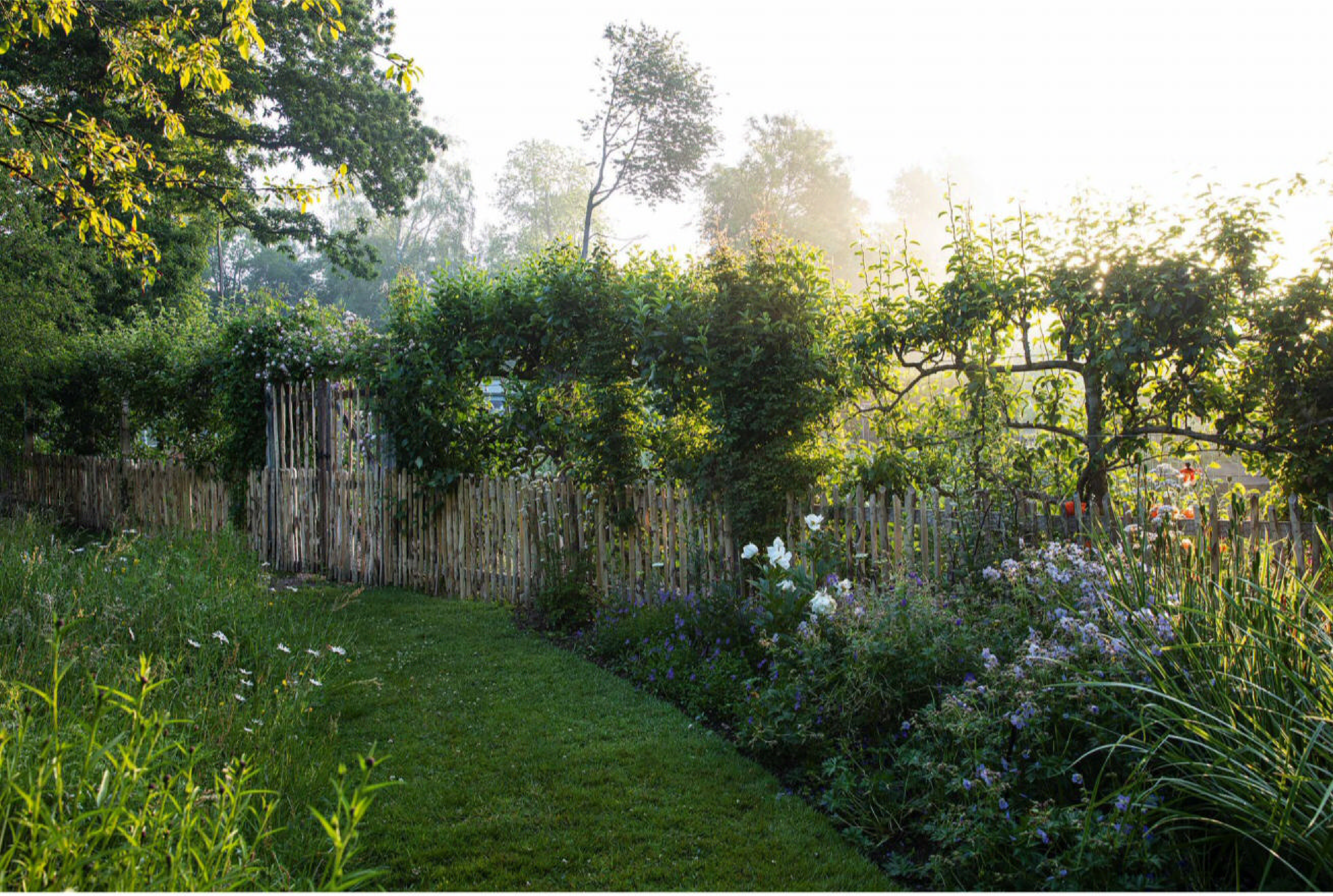
The need to cultivate large quantities of vegetables has dwindled now that Bella's children have grown up and moved away, and these days the kitchen garden is increasingly ornamental. Soft-blue love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*) pops up everywhere since Bella grew the flowers for her daughter's wedding more than two years ago.

I have a lot of blue- and lavender-coloured flowers, partly because I love them, but also because I'm thrifty and propagate them from what I already have



I can't help it. Whenever I have the space and time I find myself adding extras… I am really not safe on a visit to Pan-Global Plants nursery

▷ new gardens, including a beautifully maintained vegetable garden (where love-in-a-mist and *Ammi majus* have self-seeded freely ever since Bella grew the flowers for her daughter's wedding, more than two years ago), and a gravel garden with the free drainage and protection necessary for treasured *Melianthus major*, *Knautia macedonica* and *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum*.

In the remains of the former cottage garden, Bella has created a wild rosarium, including the dainty-flowered *Rosa* Kew Gardens (= 'Ausfence') and the highly fragrant white rambling rose *Rosa* 'The Garland' underplanted with foxgloves and cow parsley, leading to a woodland clearing where rough stools, carved from the stumps of felled sycamores, are drawn up around an open fire.

Most recently, Bella cleared an overgrown conifer plantation to give her the space and slightly acid soil necessary to explore a growing interest in rhododendrons, azaleas and hydrangeas. "I am really not safe on a visit to Pan-Global Plants nursery," she says, pointing out a *Hydrangea heteromalla* so choice that it has only a registration number, not a name.

Bella has come a long way since she arrived at Pie Corner as a novice gardener. She has taken a degree in garden history, chaired the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and qualified as a professional garden designer, but her greatest achievement remains her own glorious garden, which will never quite be finished. ■

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Pie Corner, Millhouse Lane, Bedmond, Hertfordshire WD5 0SG.

Open The garden will open for the National Garden Scheme on 18 June, 5pm-8pm. Admission £5. Please note that all tickets must be booked online in advance at **ngs.org.uk**

Above A path of mown grass lined with a cool mix of *Geranium pratense* 'Mrs Kendall Clark', *Paeonia* 'White Wings', *Valeriana officinalis* and *Viola* 'Belmont Blue' marks the transition from more cultivated areas to the wilder meadow and leads to the entrance to the vegetable garden, which is covered in *Rosa* 'Noisette Carnée'. Fencing made of chestnut palings backed by espaliered apple and pear trees creates a rustic boundary.

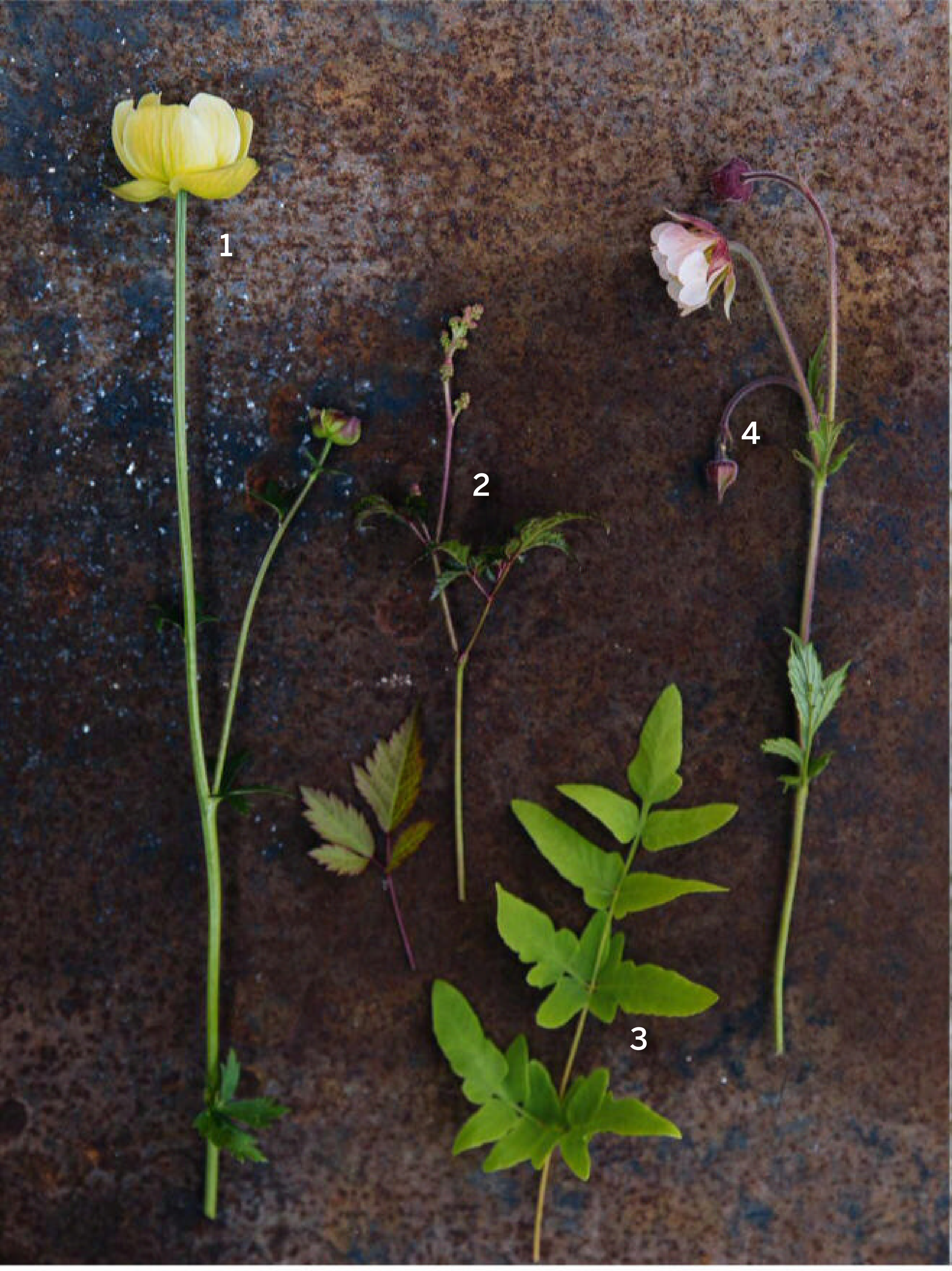
Top right In the farther parts of the garden, wildflowers are encouraged to seed into the rough grass. Bella is assiduously introducing yellow rattle, which naturally inhibits the growth of tough grasses, to create space in which other meadow flowers can thrive.

Bottom right At the end of the wild Rosarium Walk, simple, timber-edged steps have been cut into a grassy bank and in summer are flanked with masses of pretty, pink foxgloves.

Soft and gently does it

Pick up on the textures and colours of pre-loved household items or discarded industrial objects to bring out the best in late-spring arrangements with cool, pastel palettes

WORDS **ALISON JENKINS** PHOTOGRAPHS **EVA NEMETH**



MOISTURE LOVERS

For many years this fire bucket sat in the corner of my studio and was used as a wastepaper bin. There are so many familiar household objects that can be repurposed once you're on the look out for them. I like both the solidity of the bucket's construction and the fine detail of the handles, but it was really the soft, burnt-red tone of the peeling paint that was most interesting to play with.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
I drilled holes in the bottom of the fire bucket using a large, masonry drill bit. I then lined the base with some sheep wool to help contain the compost and to stop water from draining away too quickly. You could also use a piece of old blanket or woollen jumper. The plants all like a damp soil and the planter is quite small, so retaining moisture is important. Choosing plants that naturally thrive in conditions such as a damp meadow or stream side creates a more natural-looking composition. I chose the astilbe and geum because they both pick up the red tone of the bucket. The buds of the trollius, a member of the buttercup family, are also flushed red.

Cultivation and care
These moisture-loving plants won't thrive if they dry out so it's important to place the container somewhere it won't get forgotten, ideally on a route you frequently use and near a tap or water butt. I often leave an old galvanised watering can alongside my groups of containers to make it even easier to water as I'm passing. You could also add a seaweed or nettle-and-comfrey feed once a fortnight. Remove any spent flower stems or tired foliage to keep the display looking fresh. If you wanted to create a more subtle arrangement you could leave out the trollius or perhaps replace it with a red astrantia such as *Astrantia* 'Hadspen Blood' or *Astrantia major* 'Claret'.

Plants

1 *Trollius* x *cultorum* 'Taleggio' Translucent, pale-yellow flowers are held in a bowl shape, erect above the foliage. 60cm. RHS H7†.
2 *Astilbe* 'Fanal' Foliage is tinged bronze when it emerges, followed by deep-red flower plumes. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
3 *Osmunda regalis* Large, architectural fronds, with unusual, chocolate-brown, spore-bearing pinnae at the tips. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.
4 *Geum rivale* Native to damp meadows and stream sides. Dusky-pink, nodding flowers are held on deep-red stems. Flowers May to July. 30cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

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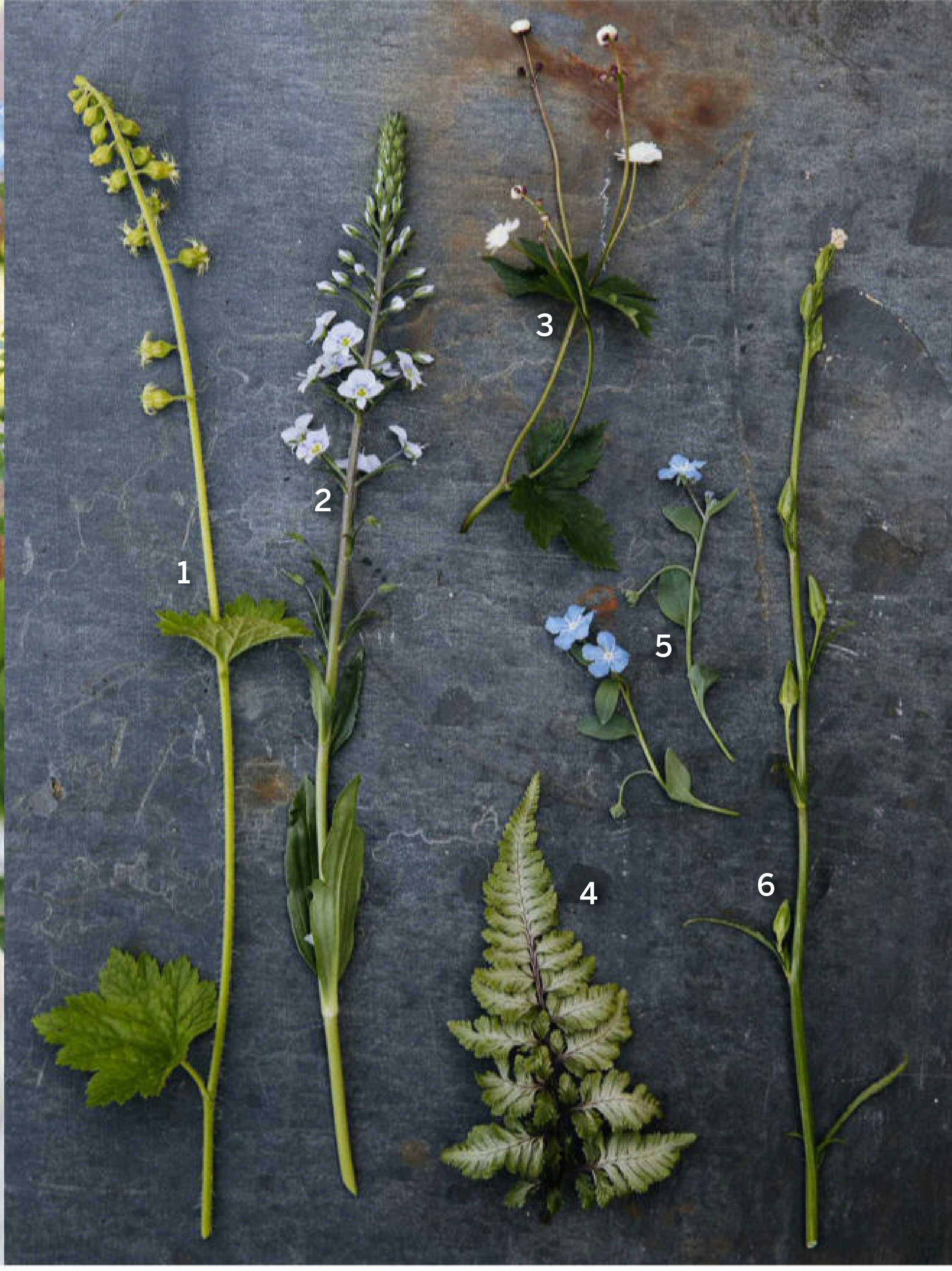
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



METALLIC TONES

The aim here was to conjure a woodland edge with the spires of the campanula and veronica pushing through dense groundcover. I was drawn to the particularly cool, blue tones of the veronica and omphalodes as well as the silver of the fern. The depth of the old tin trunk helps to retain the moisture that these woodlanders enjoy and the earthy tones of the tin lend a rustic, neutral feel, which is picked up gently in the purple midrib of the fern.

How to achieve the look

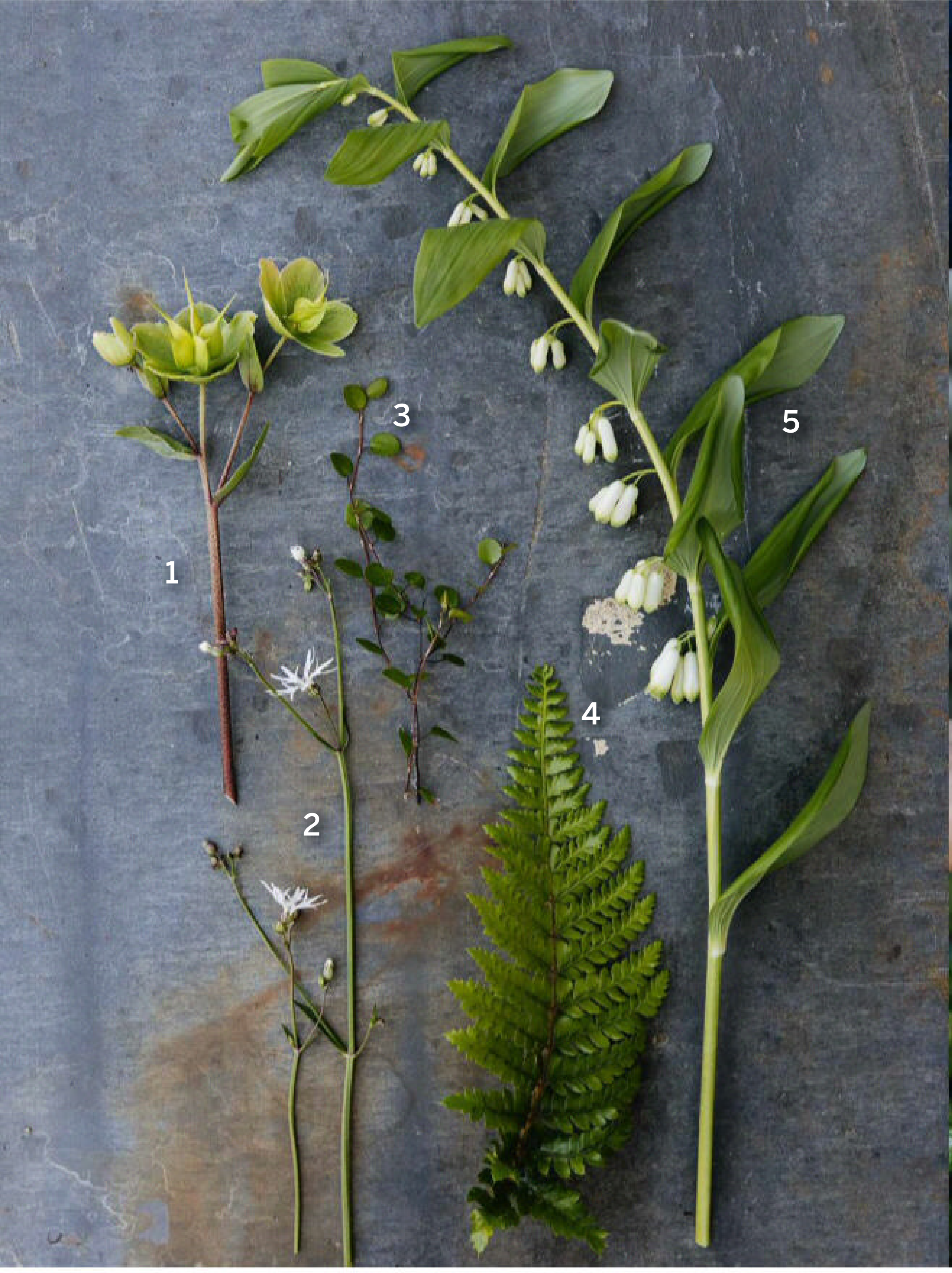
Container and composition
I'd had this wonderful old trunk knocking around in the shed for some time, just waiting for a time when it would come in handy, but you may be able to find something similar from a local salvage yard or auction room and it's always worth searching online under 'salvage and architectural antiques'. The container needed some height to balance its weight and I liked the elegance of the campanula, which almost looks better in bud than in flower. To extend the season, you could replace the veronica with *Thalictrum* Splendide White (= 'Fr21034'), which gives a beautiful summer lift to a woodland planting as it flowers in July and adds height and airiness.

Cultivation and care
I use a peat-free compost such as Melcourt Sylvagrow or Dalefoot, but for plants that like a rich, woodsy soil I add some well-rotted leaf mould, garden compost and/or some top soil. Mole hills can be a great source of nicely friable soil if you have any nearby. Placing the container in the shade ensures that it doesn't dry out too quickly. A dark background such as this yew hedge highlights the pale flowers, much as they would be seen in the shade of woodland trees. Cut back the tellima after flowering to encourage fresh growth through to the autumn. *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'All Summer Blues' is not easy to source, but you could substitute it with *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Cherry Ingram' or even *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Betty Bowring'.

Plants

1 *Tellima grandiflora* A self-sower, good for naturalising in woodland. 75cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.
2 *Veronica gentianoides* Pale-blue flowers on spires above mat-forming foliage. 45cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
3 *Ranunculus aconitifolius* 'Flore Pleno' Dainty, white flowers from April to June. 80cm. AGM. RHS H7.
4 *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* Unusual grey colour with red mid-rib. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
5 *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'All Summer Blues' Masses of pale-blue flowers April to July. 20cm. RHS H5.
6 *Campanula persicifolia* Classic, unfussy, cottage-garden perennial. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

HARDING



WELCOMING GREENS

This old water tank sits near my front door so it has to work hard to look good all year round. The hellebore and ferns were planted in November but were still looking so good I didn't have the heart to remove them. There was a sarcoccoca planted centrally, which is a classic shrub to include for winter scent, but I wanted to introduce some height so replaced it with the Soloman's seal (*Polygonatum* x *hybridum*) and added the lychnis for some seasonal sparkle.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
Old, galvanised water tanks are fairly easy to find at reclamation yards and it's worth looking out for the ones with the riveted edges. As they're relatively large, they're useful for more permanent planting. I like to use plants that arch over to soften edges and the ferns are useful for this. The muehlenbeckia drapes well too and draws the eye down. I could have used *Libertia chilensis* instead of the Solomon's seal for its tall strappy leaves and white flowers as well as having the advantage of being evergreen. White flowers can sometimes disappear against a pale wall, so I've often included dark-red tulips in this container, as they pick up the pink tone in the hellebores and show up well against the pale stone.

Cultivation and care
The seedheads of the hellebores are really attractive so I don't tend to deadhead them. Hellebore foliage often attracts fungal disease so keep an eye on this and remove any damaged foliage to prevent it from spreading further. The muehlenbeckia looks demure and delicate, but will eventually want to become a vigorous climber so needs keeping in check if it's to be contained within a planter. If the ferns are left in position permanently, cut back the old foliage early in the spring to allow the fresh, new foliage to emerge. It takes much longer to remove them once they become mingled with the young leaves so it's worth tackling it sooner rather than later.

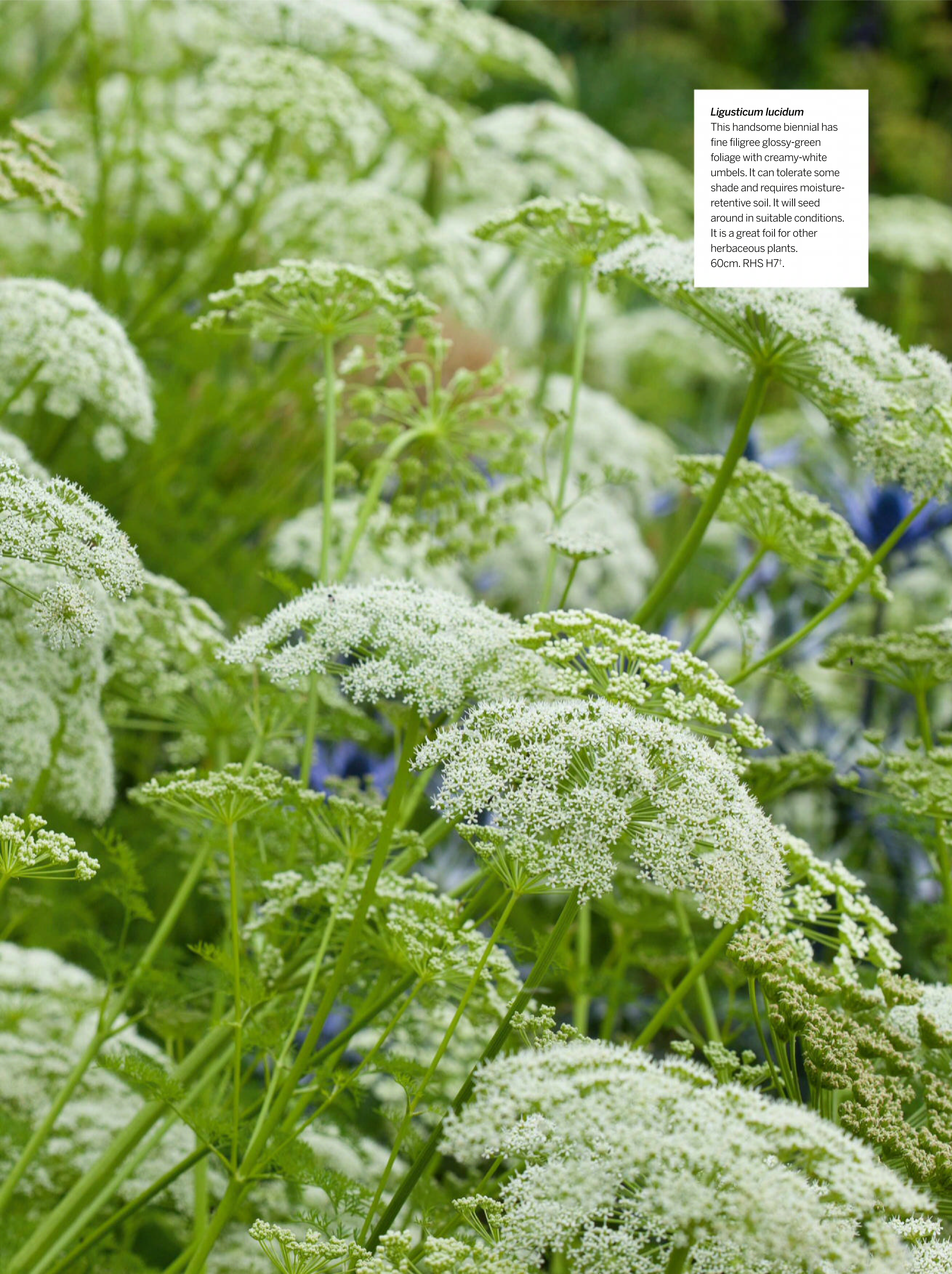
Plants

1 *Helleborus* x *sahinii* 'Winterbells'
Hybrid of *H. niger* and *H. foetidus* that flowers from November to June. 50cm. RHS H4.
2 *Lychnis flos-cuculi* 'White Robin'
Pure-white strain of the native ragged robin. 70cm. RHS H7.
3 *Muehlenbeckia complexa*
A vigorous climber if left to its own devices. Cold winds may cause it to defoliate in winter. 3m. RHS H3.
4 *Polystichum polyblepharum*
Evergreen fern, good in dry shade. 70cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
5 *Polygonatum* x *hybridum* Robust, architectural perennial with green-tipped. white, pendulous flowers. 1m. AGM. RHS H7.

UMBELLIFERS

As loved by pollinators as they are by gardeners and designers, this vast group of plants creates a froth of delicate flowers and foliage to suit many garden styles

WORDS MARINA CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHS ANNAÏCK GUITTENY



Ligusticum lucidum
This handsome biennial has fine filigree glossy-green foliage with creamy-white umbels. It can tolerate some shade and requires moisture-retentive soil. It will seed around in suitable conditions. It is a great foil for other herbaceous plants.
60cm. RHS H7[†].

The Apiaceae family is so vast no single feature could do it justice, so here I'm going to concentrate on one subfamily: Apioideae, familiar to many in the forms of vegetables such as carrots, herbs including dill and coriander, and the frothy mass of small white flowers that wave aloft over ferny green foliage along hedgerows. This diaphanous haze is the flowering peak of the humble cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), sometimes referred to as Queen Anne's lace.

All are known as umbellifers, characterised by the formation of their flowers in umbels (meaning umbrella-like), a flat-topped inflorescence supported by a pedicel (a stem supporting a flower or seed), which all originate from the same point on the main stem. Other characteristics include hollow internodes (the space between two leaf joints), aromatic volatile oils emitting a herby odour and, in many genera, finely dissected foliage. Individual flowers are usually cream, white or yellow and small but so numerous they make substantial flowerheads. Many umbellifers are monocarpic, meaning they die after flowering but set prodigious quantities of seed. They may be annual, biennial or short-lived perennials.

My interest in umbellifers stems from an ecologist's vantage point. They are an important food source for the non-specific pollinators, such as flies, beetles, moths and hoverflies, which are vital for encouraging insect biodiversity and unlike bees aren't attracted by a flower's colour but by its foetid smell. The hollow stems also provide valuable overwintering accommodation for many beneficial insects, which burrow into the plant above the solid node and are well protected from the elements. From an ornamental viewpoint, their attractive dissected foliage is a good foil for border perennials, and architectural umbellifers, such as *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum* and *Peucedanum verticillare*, give structure and height. Purple-suffused foliage and flowers have occurred several times in the wild and eagle-eyed collectors have propagated and distributed them. Notable are *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing' and more recently the darker *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Dial Park', discovered in Olive Mason's Worcestershire garden of the same name, with purple-black foliage and white- or pink-tinged flowers. *Angelica sylvestris* 'Vicar's Mead' and *Angelica sylvestris* 'Ebony' have pink umbels. Pink-flowered umbellifers also include *Pimpinella major* 'Rosea', *Pimpinella rhodantha* and *Chaerophyllum hirsutum* 'Roseum'. Purple-flowered *Angelica gigas* is grown for herbal medicine in Korea but makes a handsome garden specimen.

Annual umbellifers are increasingly popular with white-flowered *Orlaya grandiflora* and *Ammi majus* the most familiar and used to great effect in the borders of Great Dixter. Dill, *Anethum graveolens,* and the easier to grow false fennel, *Ridolfia segetum*, are yellow-flowered annuals and *Daucus carota* 'Dara' and *Daucus carota* 'Purple Kisses' are two purple-flowered ornamental carrots.

Monocarpic umbellifers, such as angelicas, can create bold statements in a border but disappear after flowering. Cutting off the flowerheads before seeds set may cause offsets to develop at the base of the plant extending their life but is unreliable. An architectural perennial, such as *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum*, could be a better option; it is hardy and a dramatic subject, hailing from Spanish mountainsides where the deep taproot uses moisture from underground. *Cenolophium denudatum*, a perennial, white-flowered umbellifer, naturalises well in dappled shade and has been much vaunted in recent display gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. *Zizia aurea* or golden alexanders hails from North America and is valuable for dappled shade in moisture-retentive soil, as is a favourite of mine, the delicate *Taenidia integerrima*, a greenish-yellow-flowering perennial that can tolerate dry soils.

Umbellifers have interesting and attractive foliage, and contrast well with different flower shapes. They provide nectar and pollen to thousands of insects, food for seed-eating birds and their hollow stems offer valuable overwintering accommodation for many beneficial insects. What's not to like? ❑

• Author Marina Christopher is a nurserywoman who runs Phoenix Perennial Plants.
Her recommendations for the best umbellifers can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What The Apiaceae is a vast family of around 300 genera and 3,000 species of annuals, biennials, perennials plus a few shrubs and trees. They have huge commercial value as many are important edible crops but conversely they include some of the most poisonous plants known to man.

Origins The majority are concentrated in the northern temperate zone although they are found sparingly throughout the rest of the world with some interesting (but difficult to grow) specimens, hailing from New Zealand and Australia.

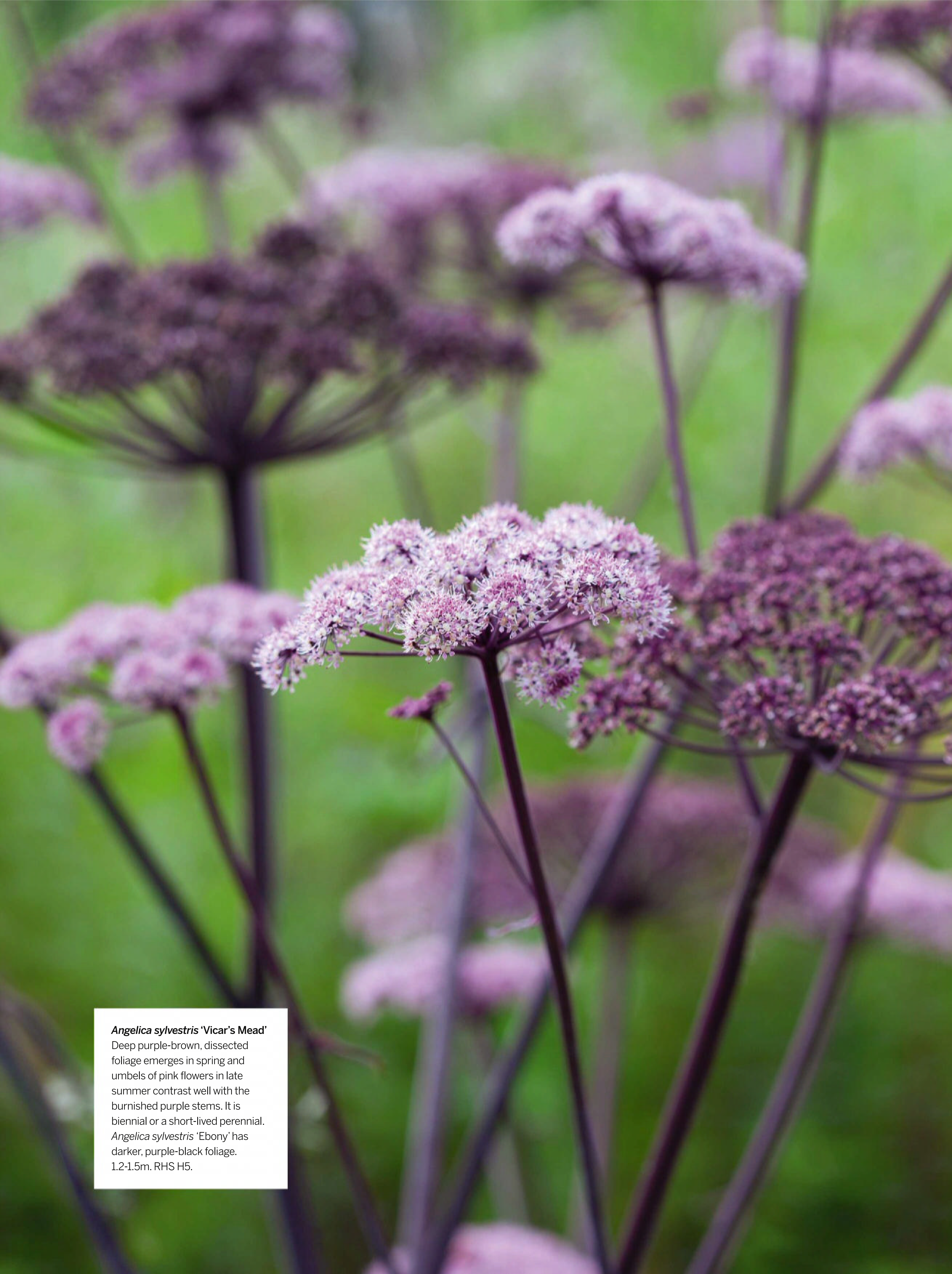
Season In such a large family there are genera that flower in early spring; the majority flower in summer and some during autumn. Some architectural skeletons persist during the winter months providing templates for spider's webs and hoar frost.

Size Diminutive genera, such as *Oreomyrrhis argentea*, are a few centimetres in height whereas *Ferula* species can grow to more than 3.5m in flower.

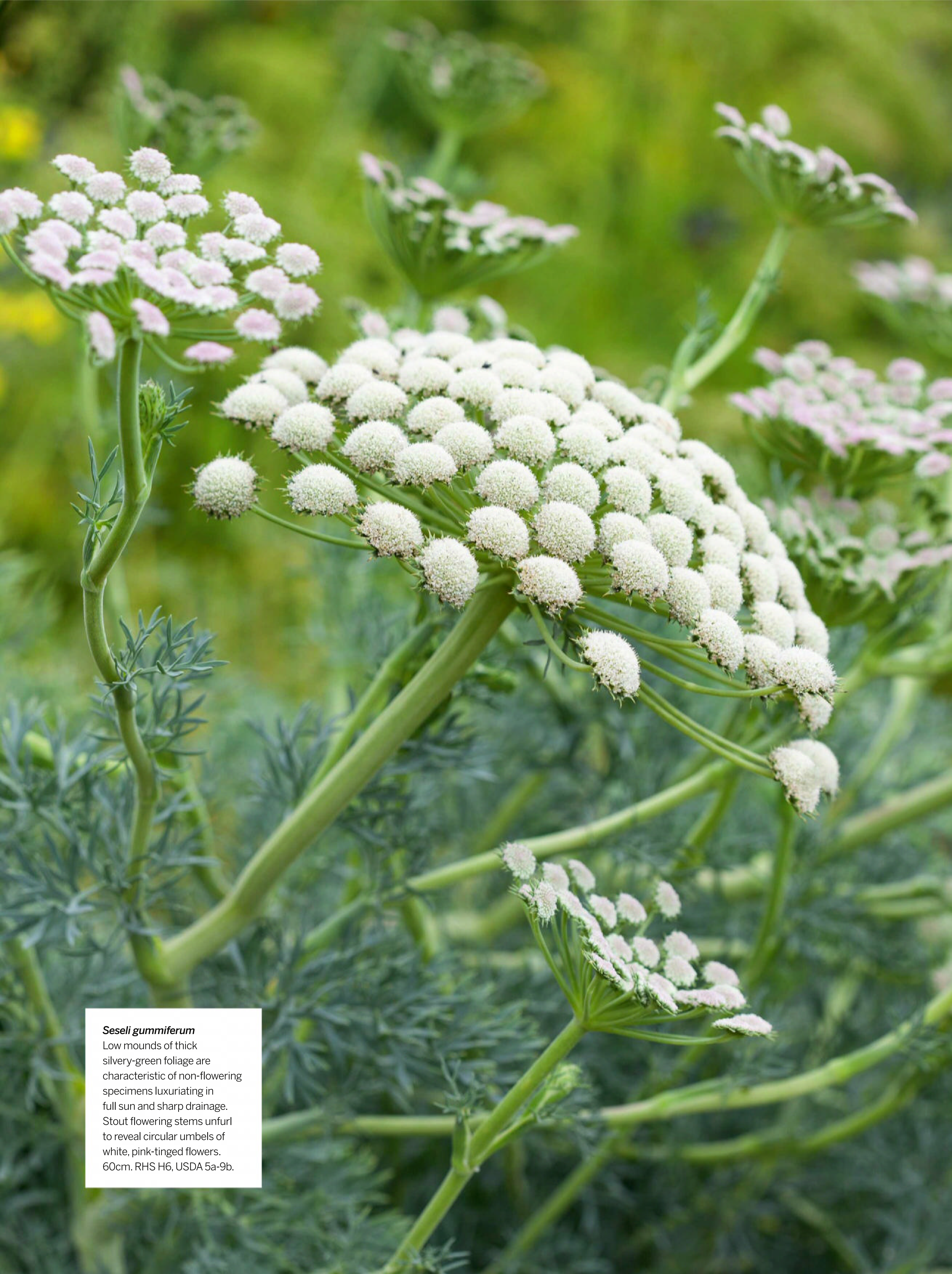
Conditions There are genera suitable for shade and moist conditions while others prefer full sun and sharp drainage.

Hardiness They range from tender to robustly hardy depending on their origin.

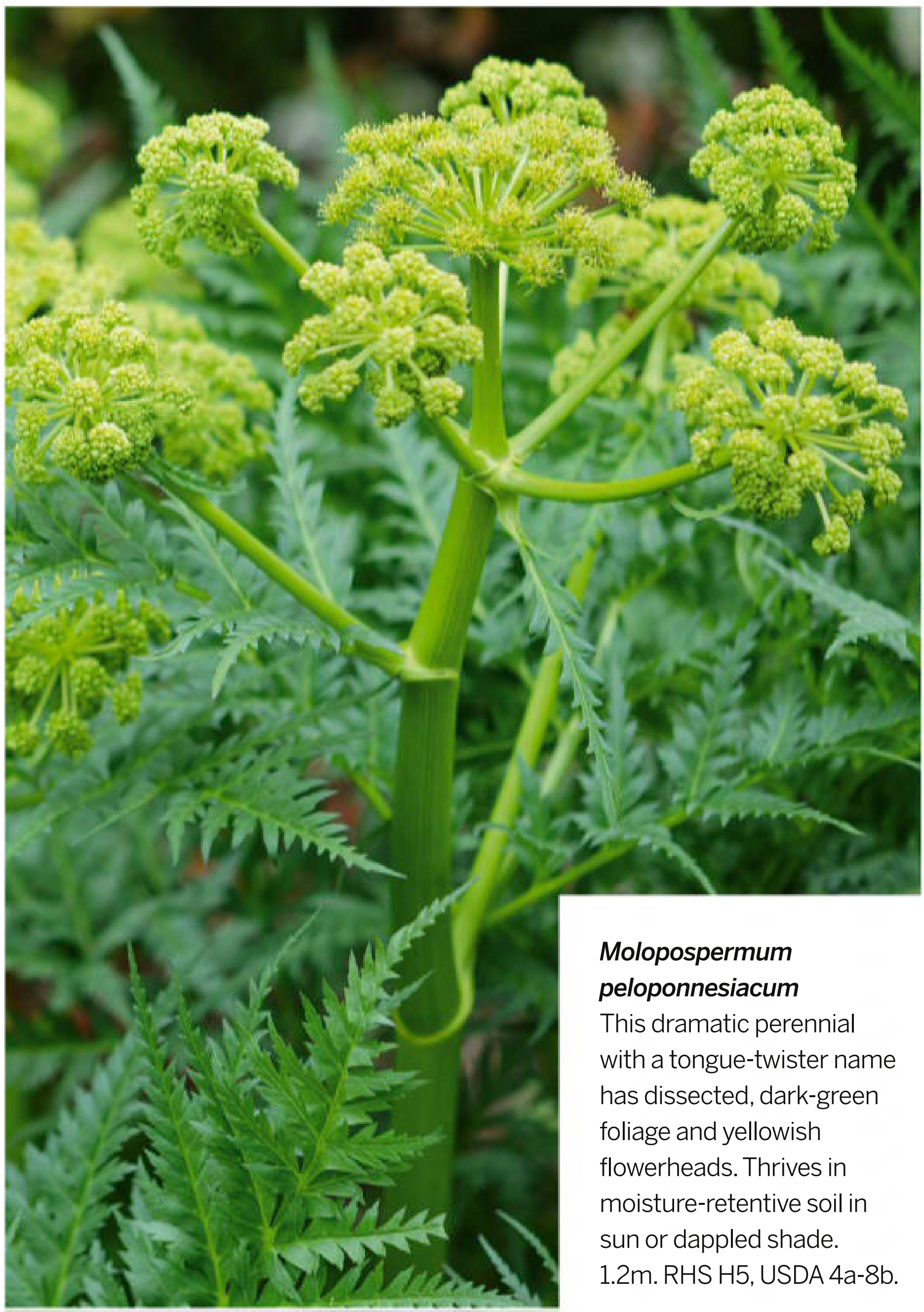
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

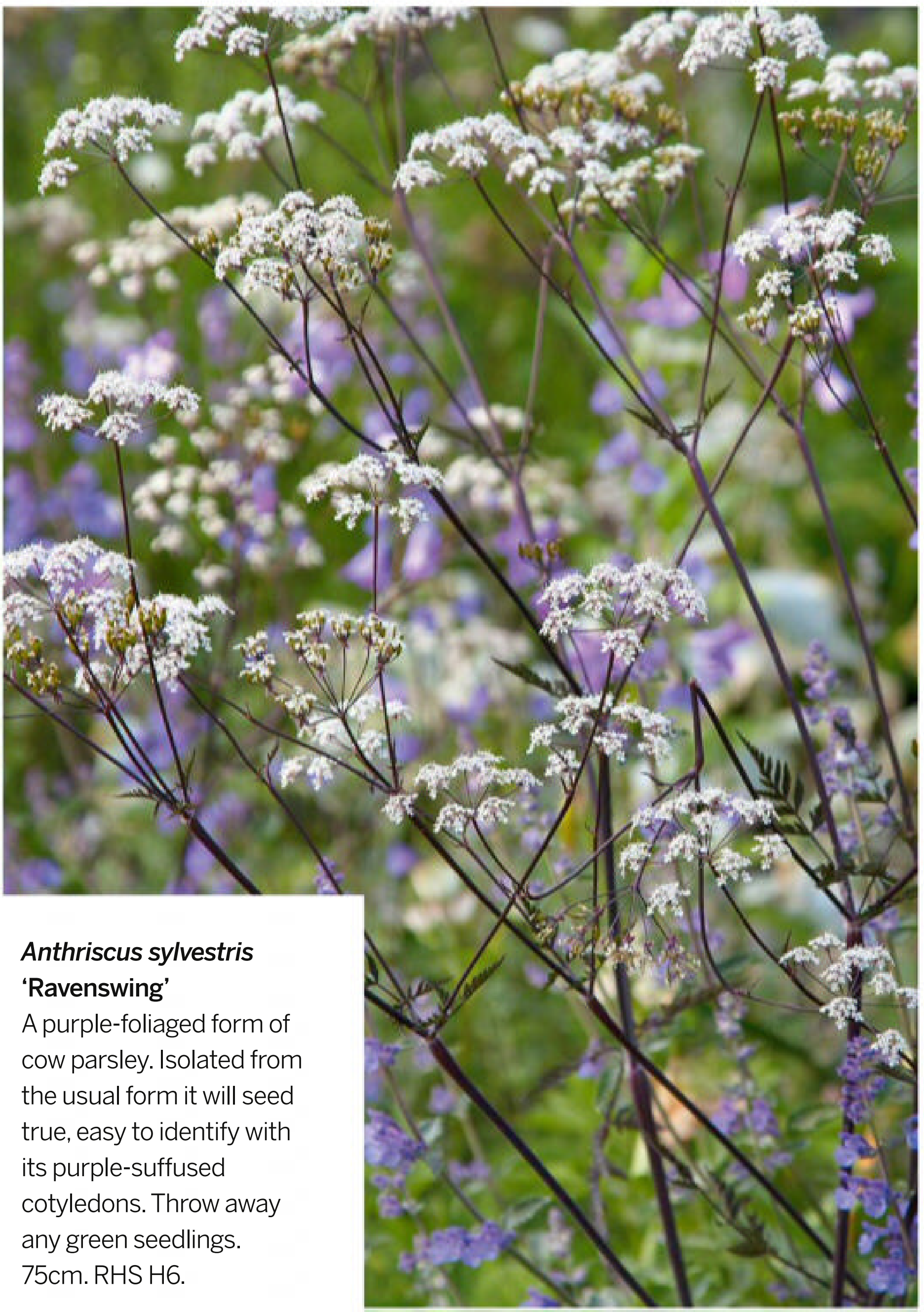


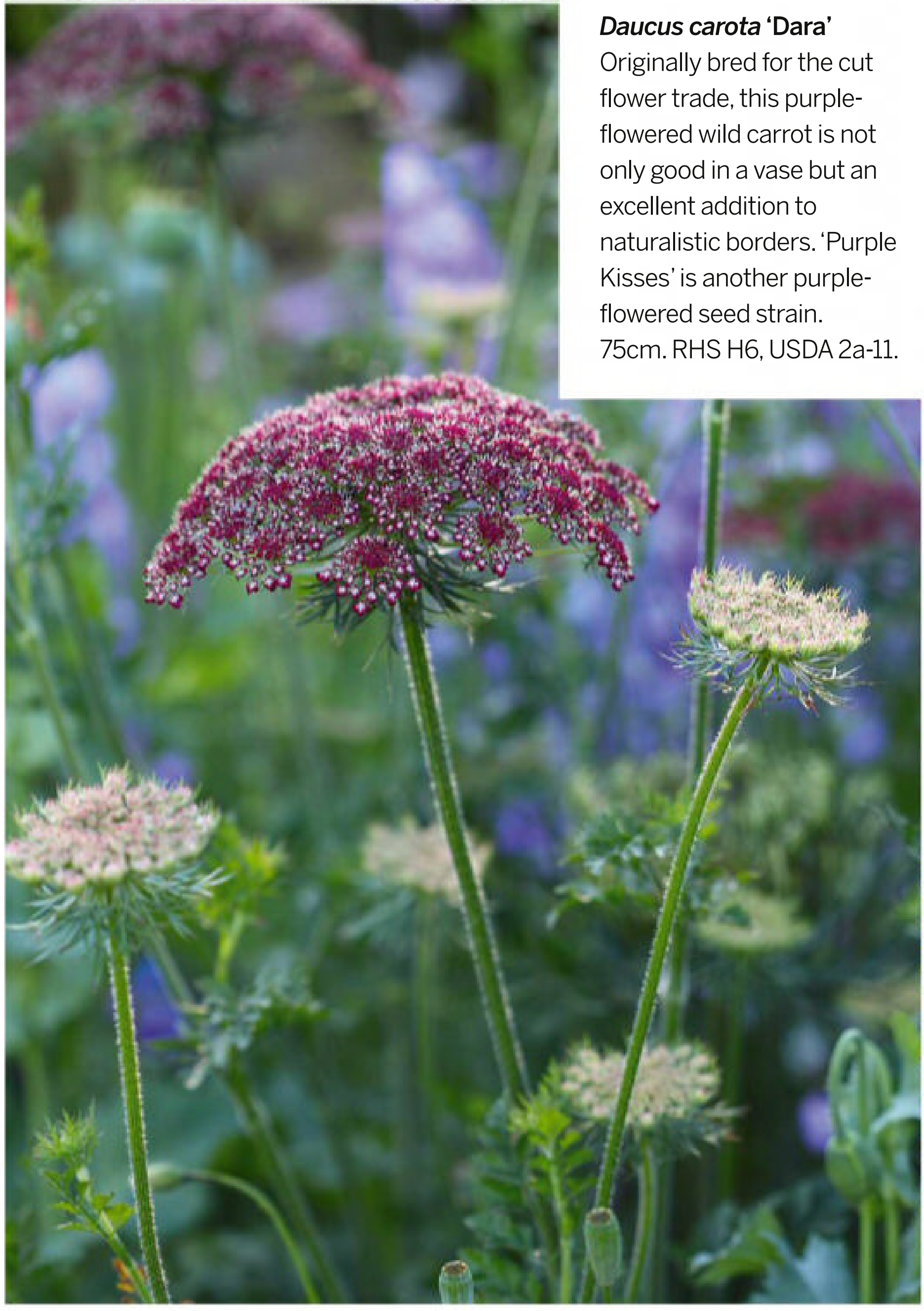
***Angelica sylvestris* ‘Vicar’s Mead’**
Deep purple-brown, dissected foliage emerges in spring and umbels of pink flowers in late summer contrast well with the burnished purple stems. It is biennial or a short-lived perennial. *Angelica sylvestris* ‘Ebony’ has darker, purple-black foliage. 1.2-1.5m. RHS H5.

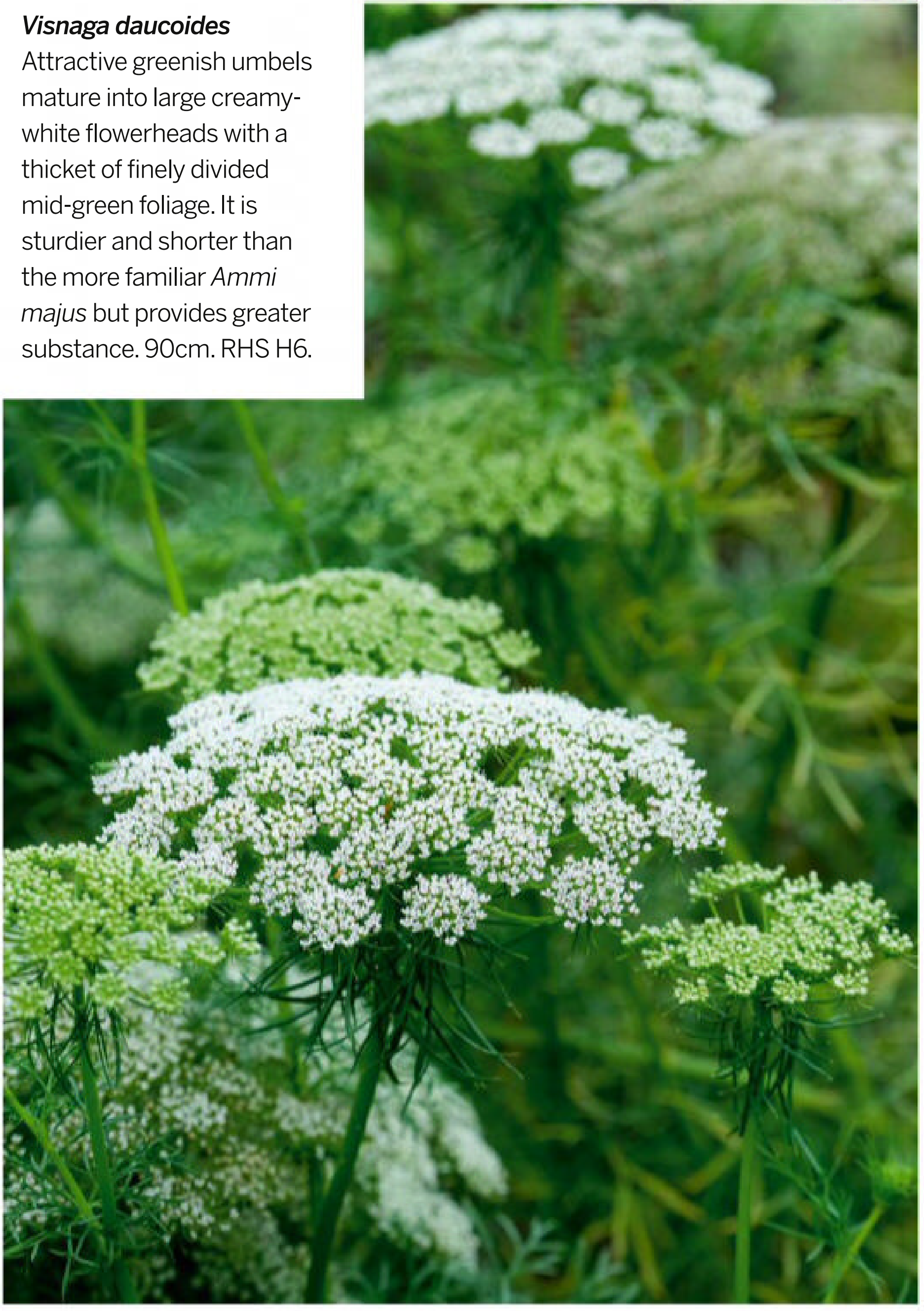


Seseli gummiferum
Low mounds of thick silvery-green foliage are characteristic of non-flowering specimens luxuriating in full sun and sharp drainage. Stout flowering stems unfurl to reveal circular umbels of white, pink-tinged flowers. 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.









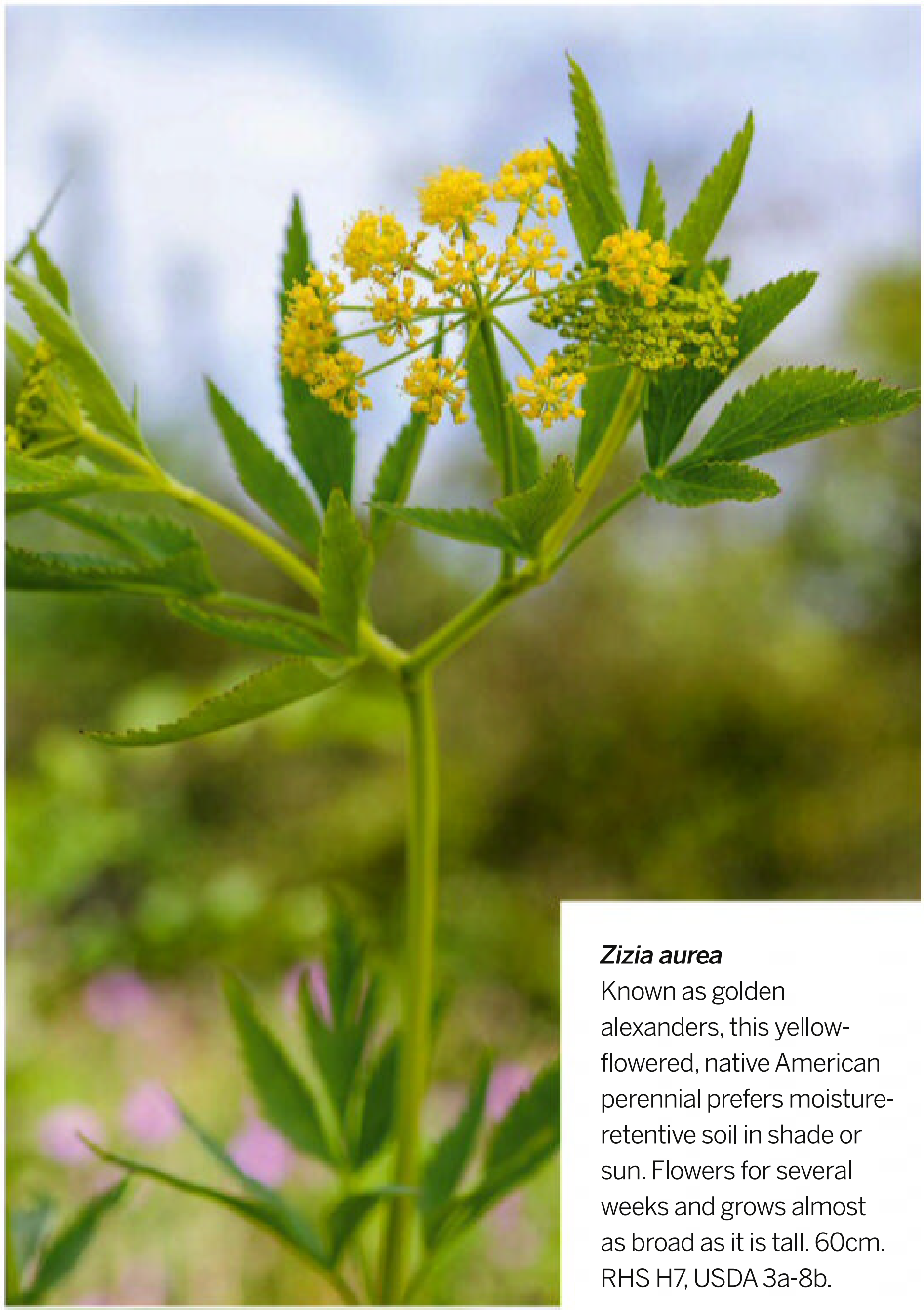
Molopospermum peloponnesiacum
This dramatic perennial with a tongue-twister name has dissected, dark-green foliage and yellowish flowerheads. Thrives in moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade. 1.2m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

***Daucus carota* 'Dara'**
Originally bred for the cut flower trade, this purple-flowered wild carrot is not only good in a vase but an excellent addition to naturalistic borders. 'Purple Kisses' is another purple-flowered seed strain. 75cm. RHS H6, USDA 2a-11.

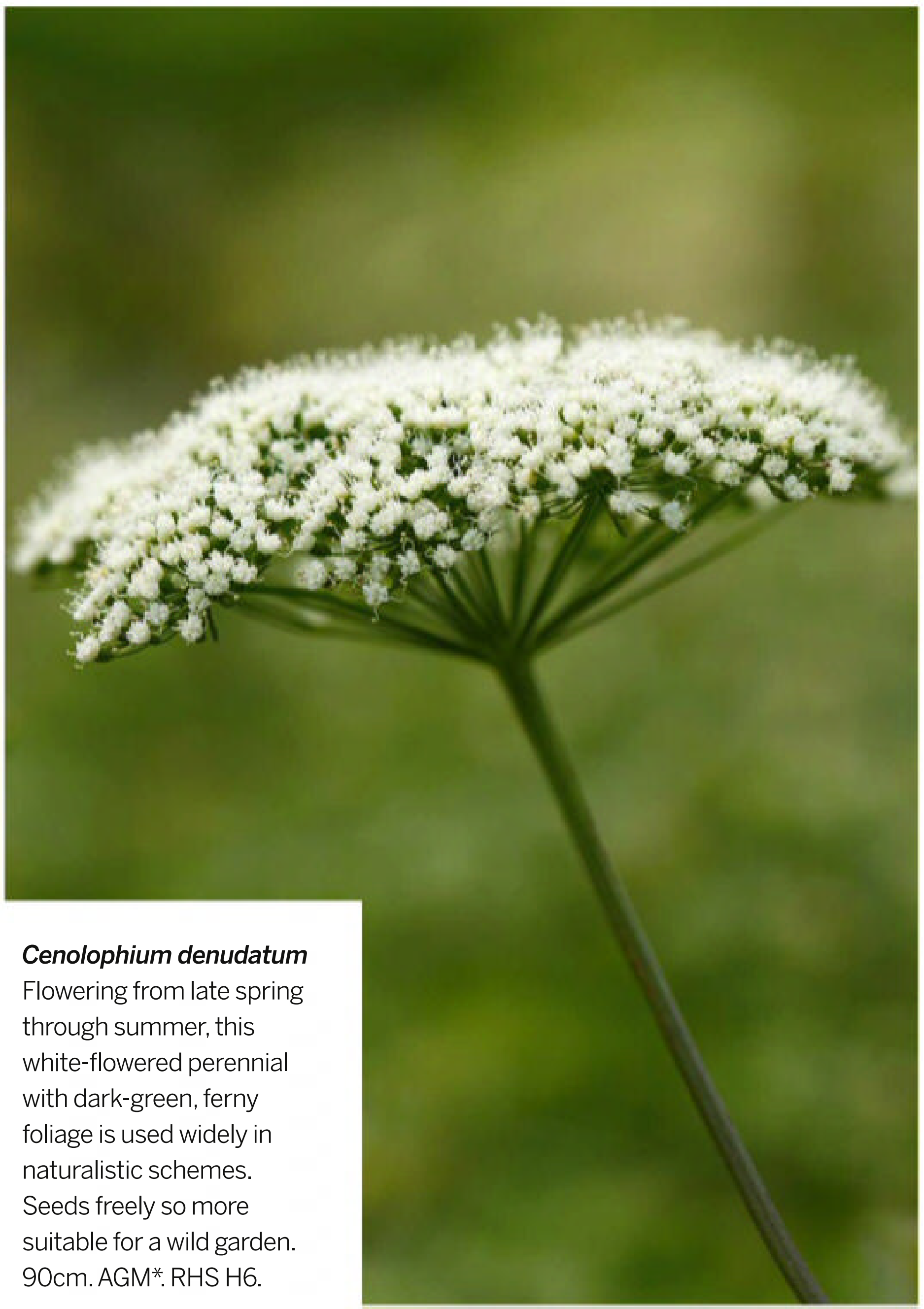
***Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'**
A purple-foliaged form of cow parsley. Isolated from the usual form it will seed true, easy to identify with its purple-suffused cotyledons. Throw away any green seedlings. 75cm. RHS H6.

Visnaga daucoides
Attractive greenish umbels mature into large creamy-white flowerheads with a thicket of finely divided mid-green foliage. It is sturdier and shorter than the more familiar *Ammi majus* but provides greater substance. 90cm. RHS H6.

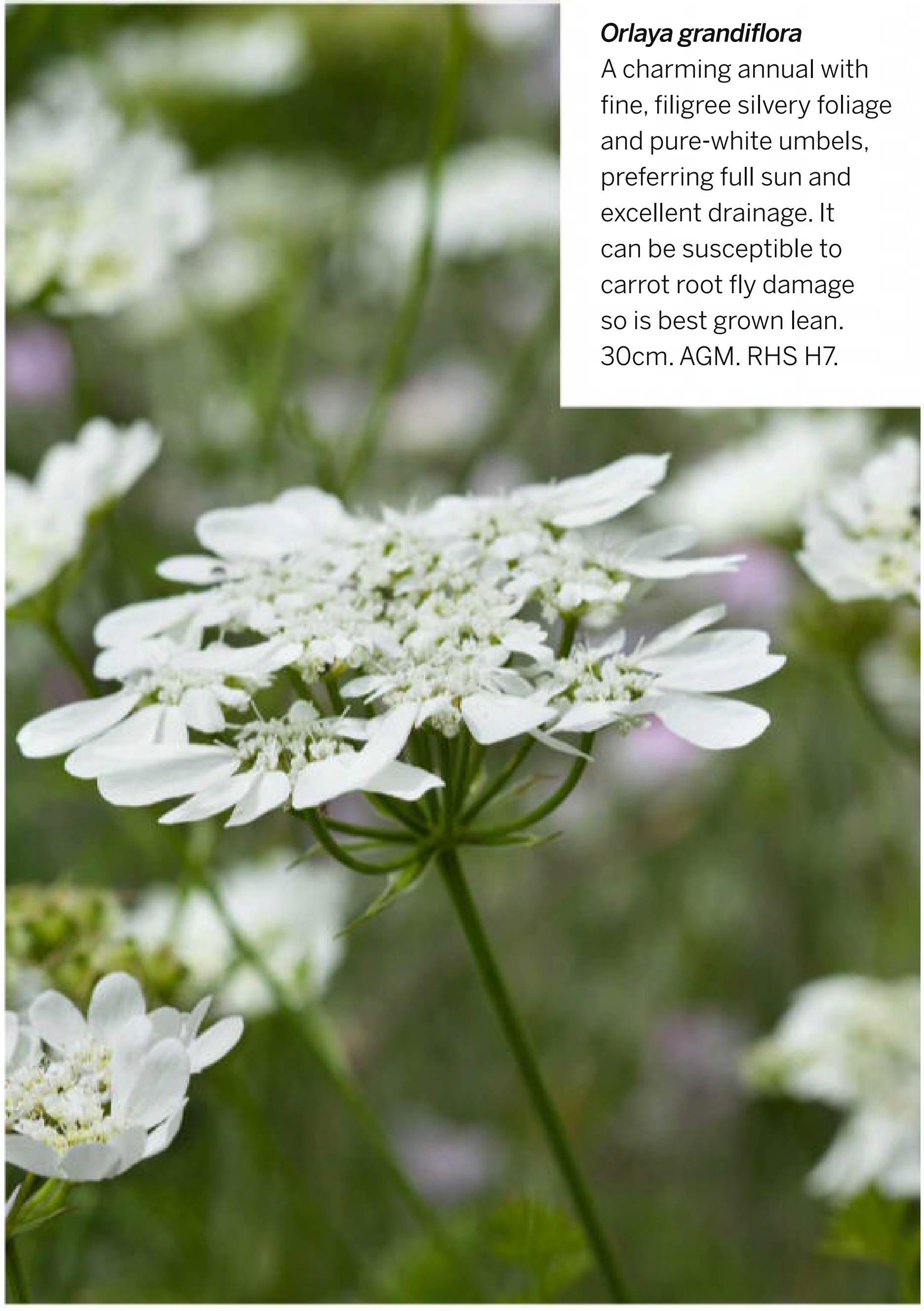
MOLOPOSPERMUM PELOPONNESIACUM BY JASON INGRAM; *VISNAGA DAUCOIDES* BY P TOMLINS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



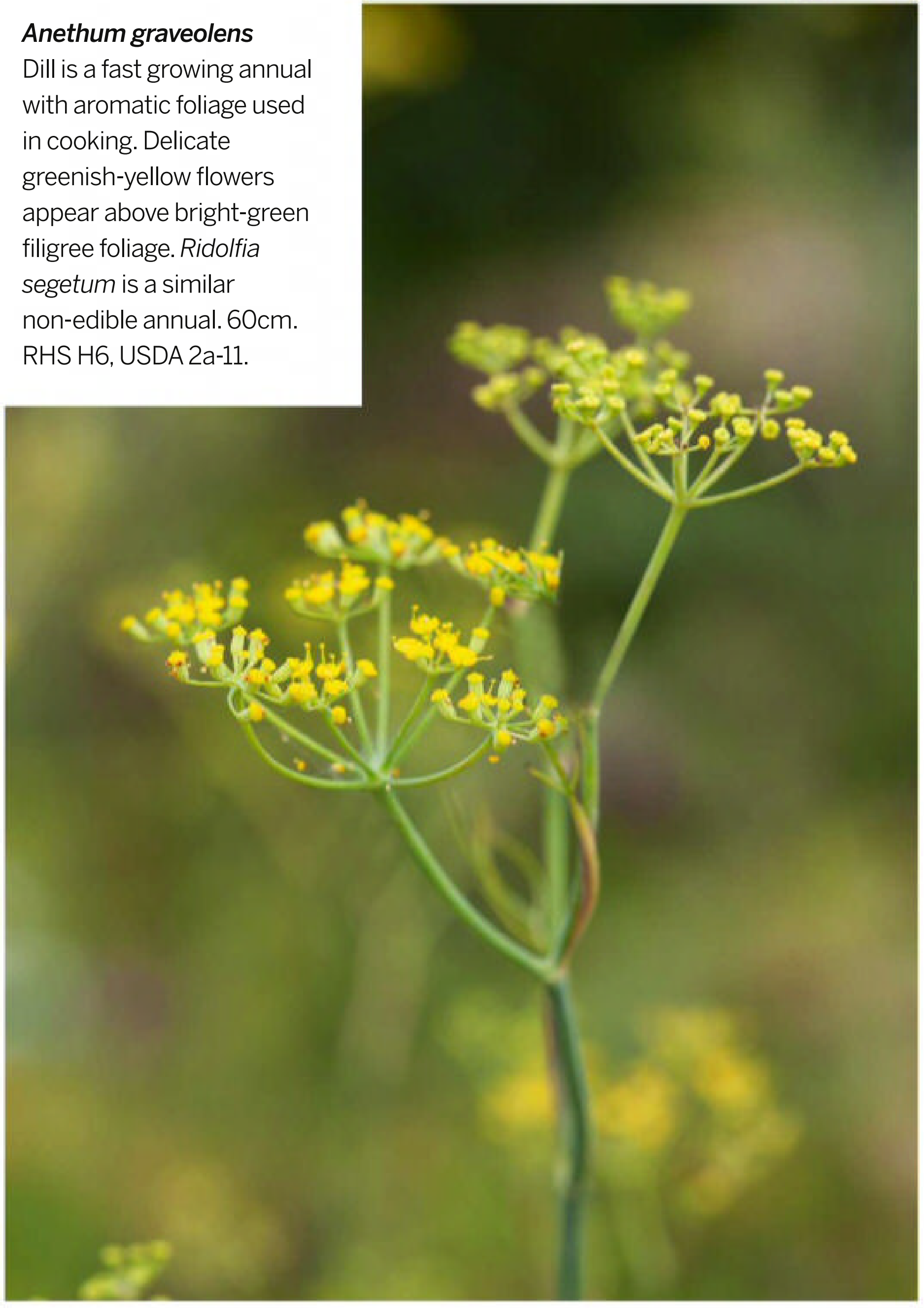
Zizia aurea
Known as golden alexanders, this yellow-flowered, native American perennial prefers moisture-retentive soil in shade or sun. Flowers for several weeks and grows almost as broad as it is tall. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.



Cenolophium denudatum
Flowering from late spring through summer, this white-flowered perennial with dark-green, ferny foliage is used widely in naturalistic schemes. Seeds freely so more suitable for a wild garden. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H6.



Orlaya grandiflora
A charming annual with fine, filigree silvery foliage and pure-white umbels, preferring full sun and excellent drainage. It can be susceptible to carrot root fly damage so is best grown lean. 30cm. AGM. RHS H7.



Anethum graveolens
Dill is a fast growing annual with aromatic foliage used in cooking. Delicate greenish-yellow flowers appear above bright-green filigree foliage. *Ridolfia segetum* is a similar non-edible annual. 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 2a-11.

ZIZIA AUREA BY JASON INGRAM

Peucedanum verticillare
Delicate, pinkish-green young foliage, towering pink-suffused stems topped by yellow umbels are most impressive. Monocarpic, it can take several years to bloom and reach a staggering height. 3.4m. RHS H6.

Melanoselinum decipiens
Usually biennial, this umbellifer has a stout stem textured by leaf scars from previous leaves. Great plates of pinkish flowers top these sturdy plants, which are only hardy in favourable sites. 1.5m. RHS H3.

Cultivation

Most cultivated umbellifers are grown from fresh seed but some are difficult to germinate taking more than one season to emerge. The seeds contain oils that inhibit germination and which naturally break down by freeze then thaw in winter, resulting in a plethora of cotyledons emerging at what may seem an inopportune time of year. Gardeners are often recommended to place seed in the fridge, but germination is far more successful if seeds are sown in pots in the autumn and left in a cold frame or unheated glasshouse to receive the see-sawing temperature changes of winter weather. Annuals such as *Ammi majus* and *Daucus carota* germinate readily from spring sowing but *Orlaya grandiflora* germinates most successfully in autumn and is more erratic if sown early in the year.

Although many umbellifers may be unpredictable in their germination habits, some are almost too eager to reproduce given favourable conditions. Carpets of *Angelica archangelica*, *Foeniculum vulgare* and *Smyrnium perfoliatum* can be plagues in some gardens whereas other growers find them difficult to establish. The carroty smell of the seeds is very attractive to voles and mice so it is important to keep them away from seed pots.

Long taproots are characteristic of this family allowing them to survive in dry, harsh conditions once the root has developed sourcing moisture and minerals from deeper levels. The root grows quickly so it is best to move seedlings into deep plug trays or pots as soon as possible. Most umbellifers have slim, linear cotyledons that are large enough to handle easily and I prefer to prick out germinated seedlings before or just as the first true leaves have emerged when the root is still reasonably short and is not damaged by the move.

Orlaya grandiflora, *Visnaga daucoides*, *Daucus carota* and *Seseli gummiferum* grow in poor, often infertile waste ground. Growing them in rich garden soils makes them larger and lusher but with changing climatic conditions, notably more wind events, there is more bruising of the foliage and root rock releasing the characteristic carroty aroma. Knowledge of their natural habitat and growing them in poorer conditions will improve their longevity. *Seseli gummiferum* is reasonably perennial in lean conditions but acts as a biennial when grown in richer soils.

Taprooted plants are often good for root cutting propagation. Umbellifers are no exception and more are found to develop from root cuttings, such as *Peucedanum verticillare*, *Meum athamanticum* and *Mathiasella bupleuroides*, an excellent recent introduction from Mexico that has proved relatively hardy in many southern gardens.

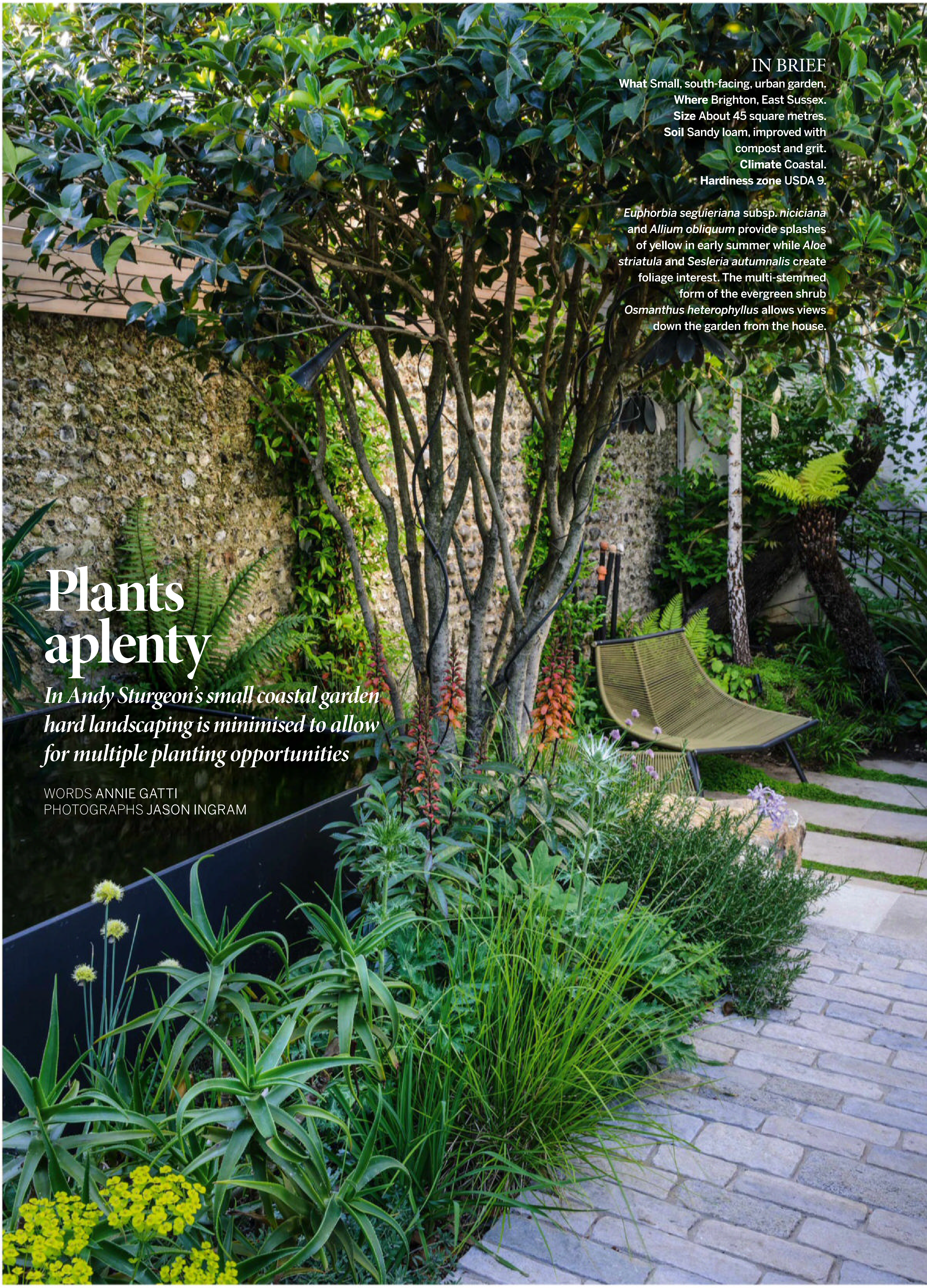
Where to see and buy

- **Binny Plants**
  Binny Estate, Ecclesmachan Road, Near Broxburn,
  West Lothian EH52 6NL.
  Tel 01506 858931,
  binnyplants.com
- **Copton Ash Garden**
  105 Ashford Road,
  Faversham, Kent ME13 8XW.
  Tel 01795 535919,
  coptonash.plus.com
- **Edulis**
  1 Flowers Piece,
  Ashampstead, Reading,
  Berkshire RG8 8SG.
  Tel 01635 578113,
  edulis.co.uk
- **Great Dixter Nurseries**
  Northiam, Rye,
  East Sussex TN31 6PH.
  Tel 01797 254044,
  greatdixter.co.uk
- **Phoenix Perennial Plants**
  Paice Lane, Medstead,
  Alton, Hampshire GU34 5PR.
  Tel 01420 560695,
  marina@phoenixperennialplants.co.uk
- **Special Plants**
  Greenways Lane, Cold Ashton, Chippenham,
  Wiltshire SN14 8LA.
  Tel 01225 891686,
  specialplants.net

Plants aplenty

In Andy Sturgeon's small coastal garden hard landscaping is minimised to allow for multiple planting opportunities

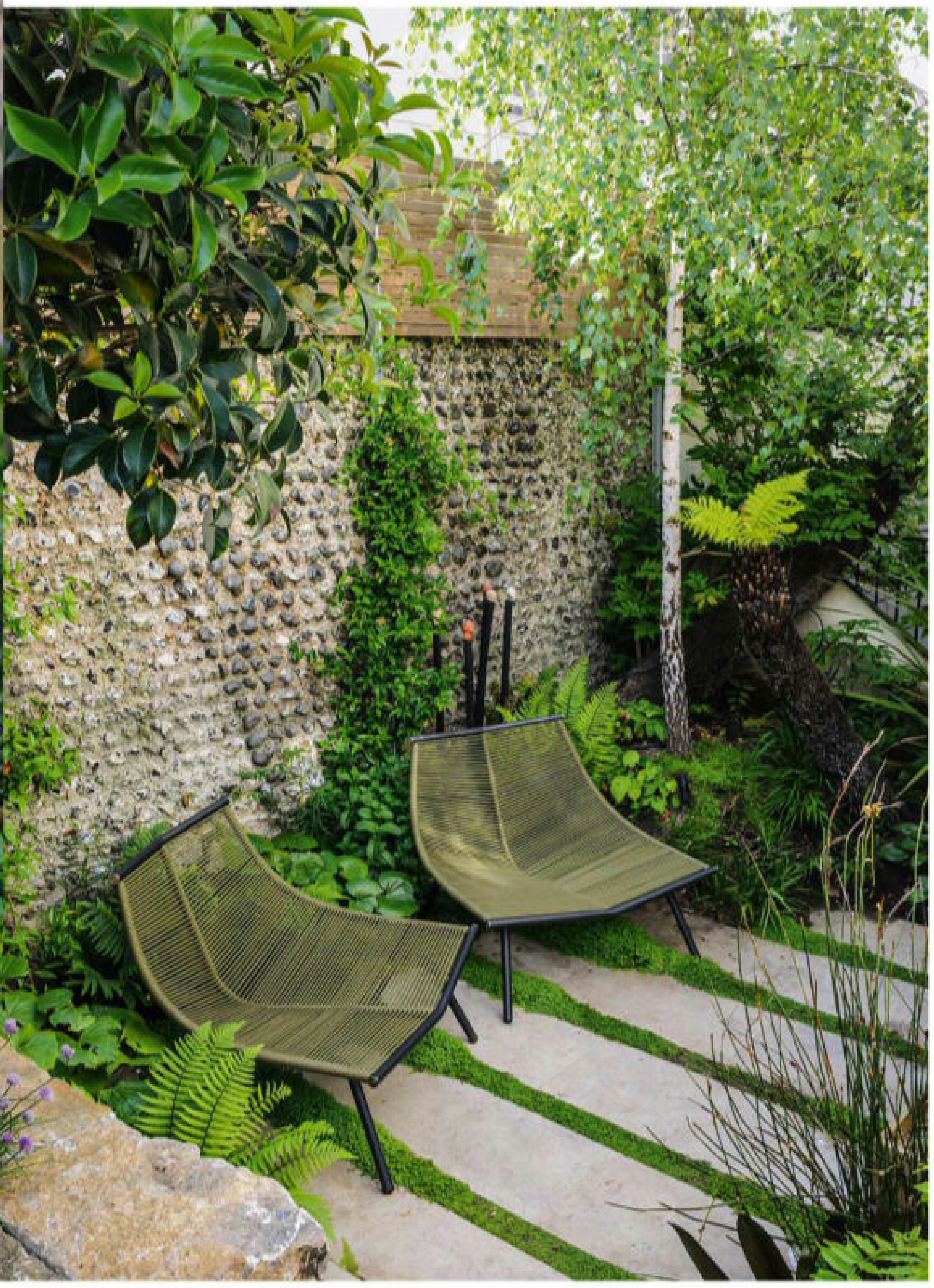
WORDS ANNIE GATTI
PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



IN BRIEF

What Small, south-facing, urban garden.
Where Brighton, East Sussex.
Size About 45 square metres.
Soil Sandy loam, improved with compost and grit.
Climate Coastal.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

Euphorbia seguieriana subsp. *niciciana* and *Allium obliquum* provide splashes of yellow in early summer while *Aloe striatula* and *Sesleria autumnalis* create foliage interest. The multi-stemmed form of the evergreen shrub *Osmanthus heterophyllus* allows views down the garden from the house.



Clockwise from top left

Digitalis isabelliana Bella (= 'Isob007'), which Andy introduced to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in his 2019 garden, has flowered right through the winter in this sheltered coastal garden. Here it is paired with other sun-lovers, such as *Eryngium* x *zabelii* 'Big Blue' and prostrate rosemary.

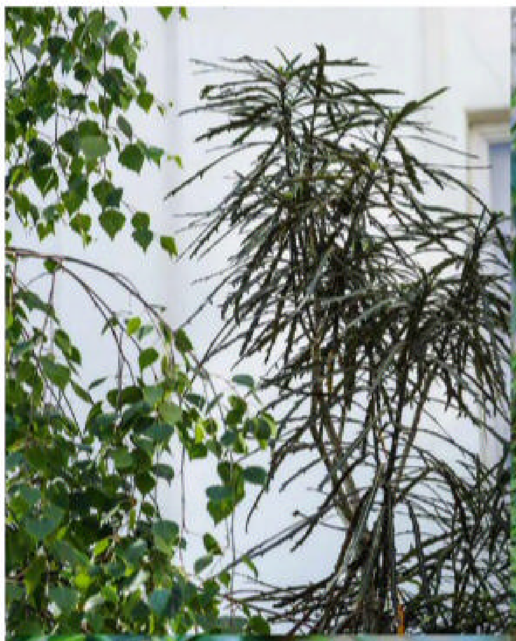
Evergreen *Osmanthus heterophyllus* creates shade for seating on the lower terrace, where the paving is softened by strips of *Soleirolia soleriolii*, and a *Betula pendula* provides privacy.

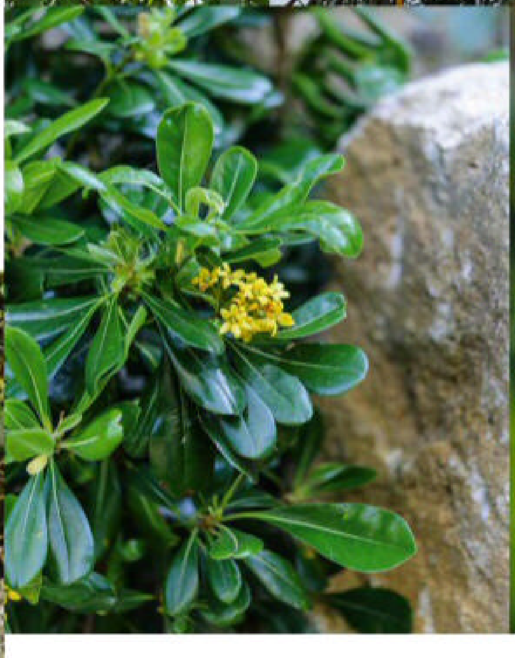
These clay heads on timber supports, which Andy calls The Welcoming Committee, came from a local artist participating in the town's Artists Open Houses festival.

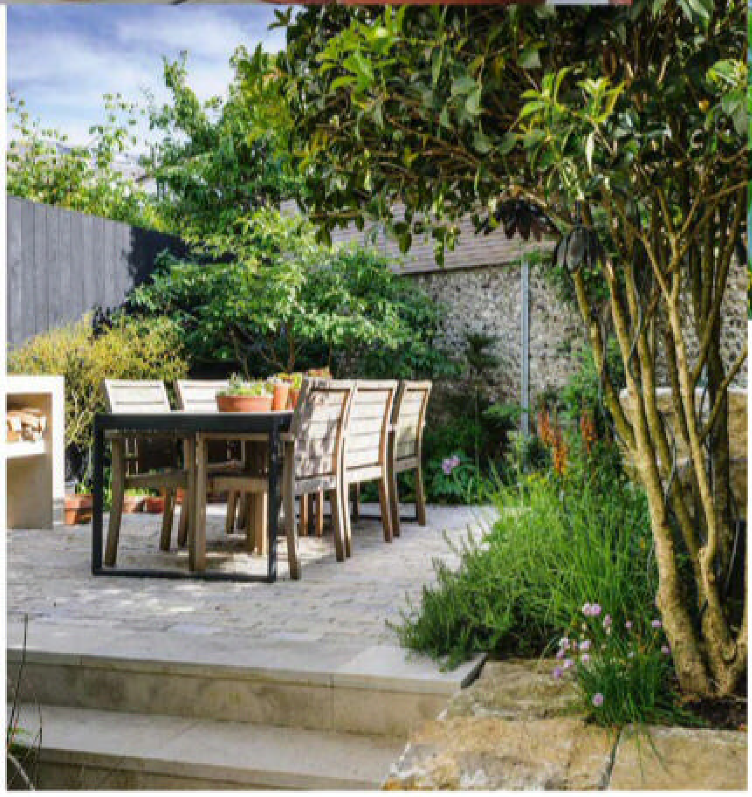
Andy Sturgeon's garden in the middle of Brighton, which he shares with his partner and four "mainly teenage" children, is a masterclass in how to make the most of an overlooked and sun-baked space. When he begins to describe what was there – an irregular-shaped plot extending from an apex at one end to the side of the house at the other; wall-to-wall paving; no mature plants to provide structure and shade – he says: "It was a tiny, hopeless garden, I've no idea why I bought this house." It did have one saving grace, though: two 180-year-old flint walls, which Andy was excited about. Just 18 months later it is now a remarkably private garden with two terraces (the lower one, at the side of the house, providing a secluded seating area), beautiful textures and all the other elements that Andy had jotted down before he started: a family-sized dining table, a pond, somewhere to cook and, essentially for this Chelsea gold medal-winning plantsman, masses of plants.

Removing the paving and nearly five cubic metres of subsoil, chalk and clay meant that he could lower the garden by half a metre, giving him more scope to plant a number of big shrubs including a multi-stemmed *Osmanthus heterophyllus* and *Chionanthus retusus* (both more than 3m tall when they were put in) and two trees, a *Betula pendula* and *Koelreuteria paniculata*. These are key to providing immediate structure and privacy, as well as shade for seating, and to satisfy Andy's passion for shade-loving plants. Using a number of other big elements – such as chunky pieces of Purbeck limestone for the retaining

▷







Clockwise from top left

A selection of succulents in clay pots can be appreciated close up from their table-top position.

Pseudopanax crassifolius and *Dryopteris wallichiana* provide evergreen structure in the shady bed on the lower terrace. *Tulbaghia* 'John May's Special' complements the silvery foliage of *Eryngium* x *zabelii* in the sunny bed by the pool while *Pittosporum tobira* helps to conceal the pool filter.

The dining area, where the whole family gathers from early spring onwards, is screened from neighbouring houses by two, mature, multi-stemmed evergreens. The bespoke outdoor kitchen, which houses a Big Green Egg cooker, is made from polished cast concrete, creating a similar finish to the steps leading to the main terrace.

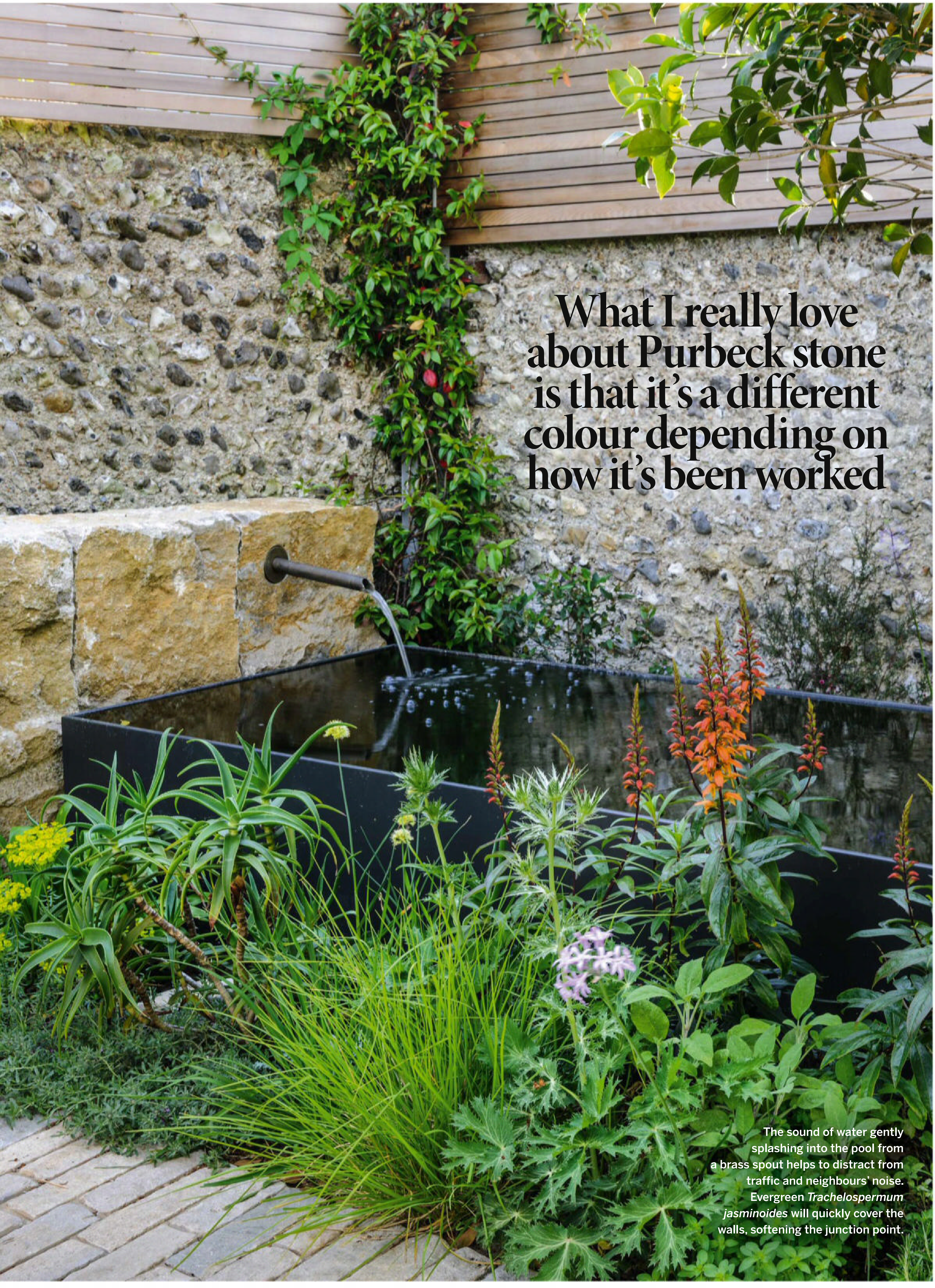
▷ walls of the main terrace and a stainless steel pool that provides a large surface to reflect light – helps to make the space feel bigger, as does the charred timber fencing covering a repaired brick wall on the east side.

By keeping the landscaping to a minimum and by using different forms of the same Purbeck stone – cobbles for the main paving, rough blocks for the retaining walls, sawn and honed pieces for the steps and for the bands on the lower terrace – all of which tone with the flint and the lime mortar in the walls, Andy has achieved a cohesion that makes the garden feel restful and uncluttered. "What I really love about Purbeck stone is that it contains greys and browns and creams, and is a different colour depending on how it's been worked."

While most of the planting is young, and will fill out and scramble up the walls in seasons to come, Andy admits that he's squeezed in as many plants as he can. A succession of bulbs including cyclamen, muscari and tulips add pops of colour from winter onwards, followed by fritillaries, alliums and gladioli. The coastal location means that more tender plants such as *Digitalis isabelliana* Bella (= 'Isob007') and evergreen *Crinodendron patagua* and *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Kiwi' are thriving. The shade cast by the *Chionanthus retusus* has allowed Andy to grow what he calls 'little gems', many of which he used in his Chelsea 2019 garden, such as *Aspidistra*, *Chloranthus sessilifolius* 'Domino' and *Beesia calthifolia*. Thanks to these pockets of shade, and other patches of sun, it has now become a richly planted plantsman's garden. ■

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Andy's work at **andysturgeon.com**



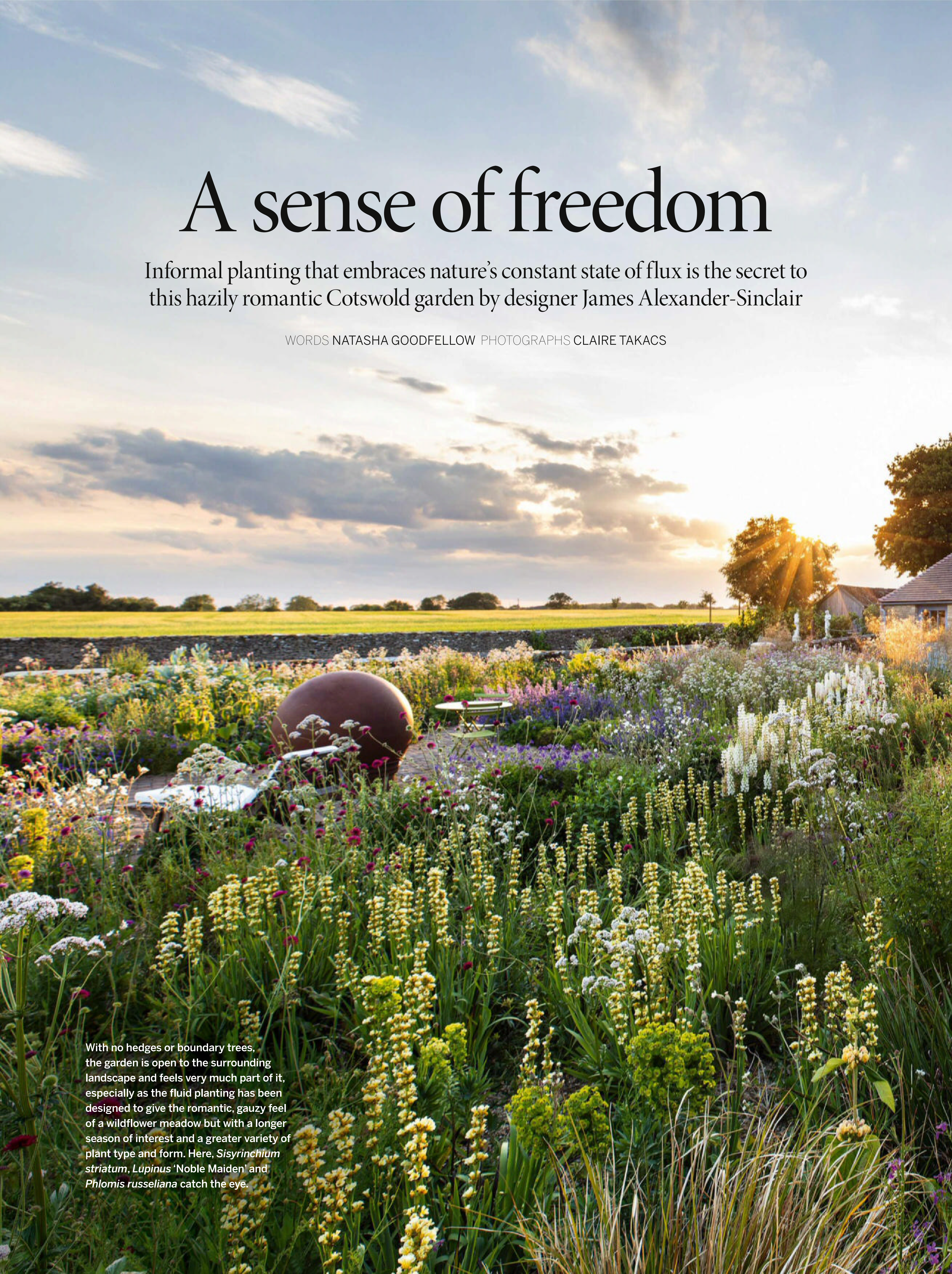
What I really love about Purbeck stone is that it's a different colour depending on how it's been worked

The sound of water gently splashing into the pool from a brass spout helps to distract from traffic and neighbours' noise. Evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides* will quickly cover the walls, softening the junction point.

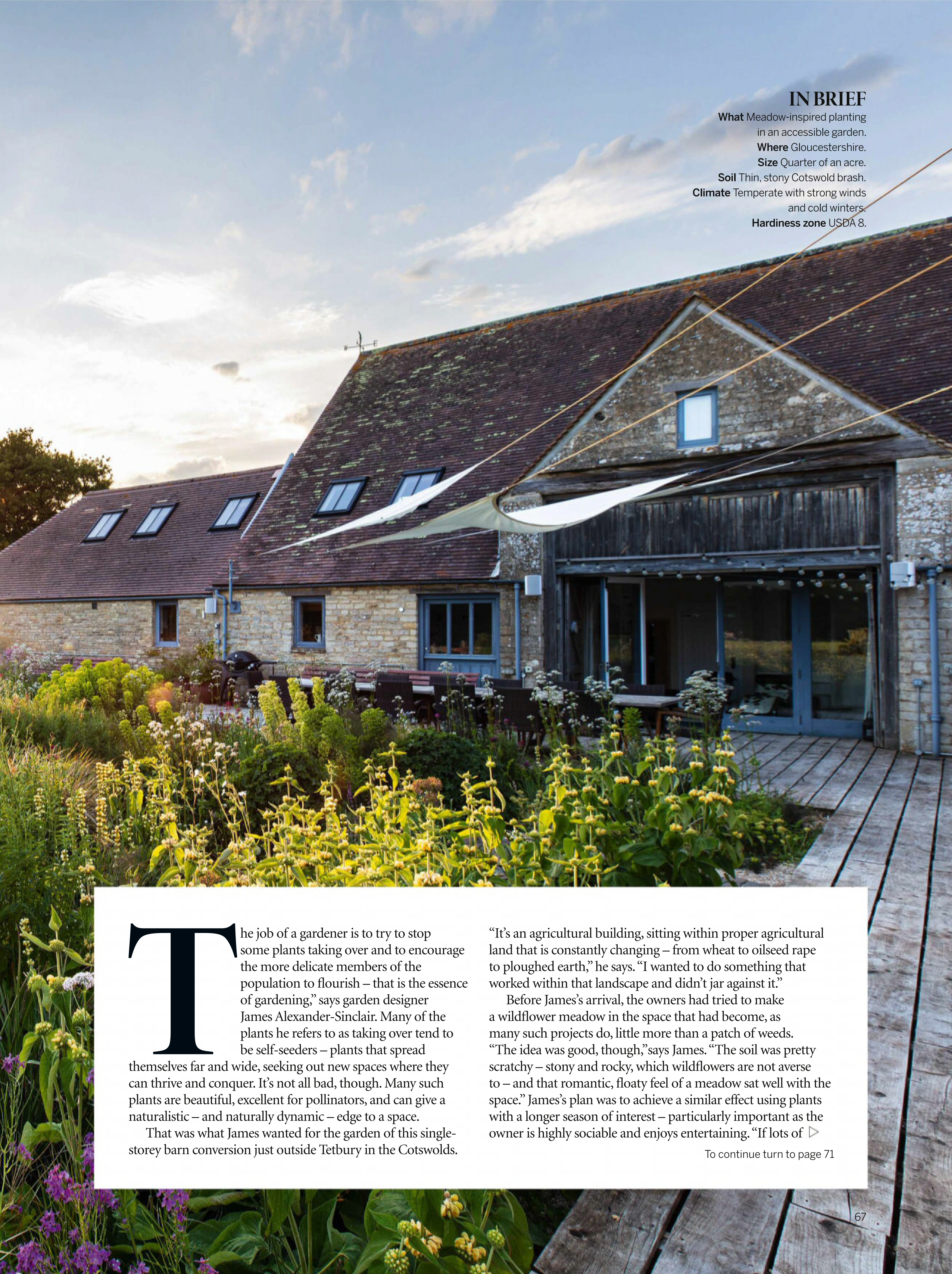
A sense of freedom

Informal planting that embraces nature's constant state of flux is the secret to this hazily romantic Cotswold garden by designer James Alexander-Sinclair

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS



With no hedges or boundary trees, the garden is open to the surrounding landscape and feels very much part of it, especially as the fluid planting has been designed to give the romantic, gauzy feel of a wildflower meadow but with a longer season of interest and a greater variety of plant type and form. Here, *Sisyrinchium striatum*, *Lupinus* 'Noble Maiden' and *Phlomis russeliana* catch the eye.



IN BRIEF

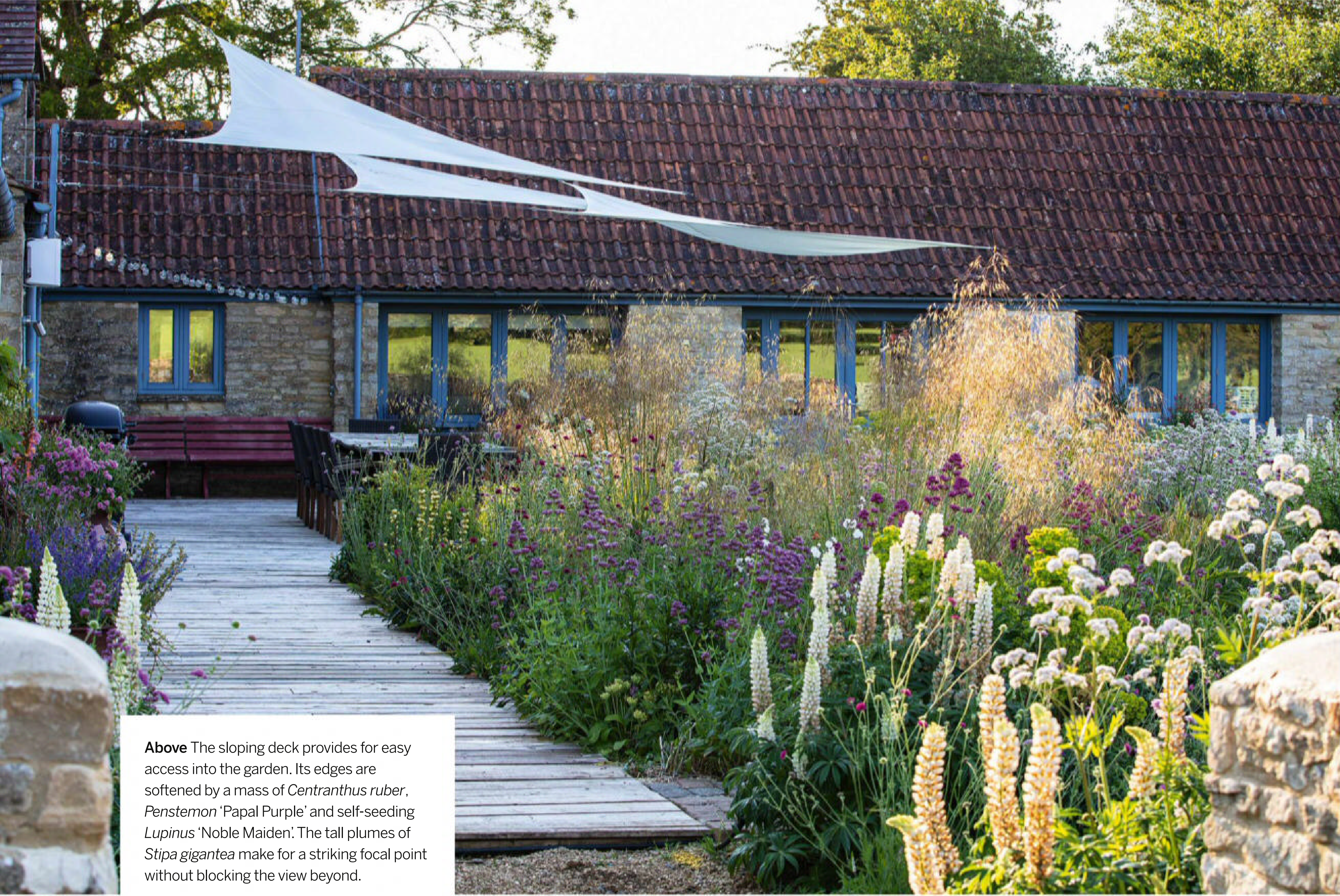
What Meadow-inspired planting in an accessible garden.
Where Gloucestershire.
Size Quarter of an acre.
Soil Thin, stony Cotswold brash.
Climate Temperate with strong winds and cold winters.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

The job of a gardener is to try to stop some plants taking over and to encourage the more delicate members of the population to flourish – that is the essence of gardening," says garden designer James Alexander-Sinclair. Many of the plants he refers to as taking over tend to be self-seeders – plants that spread themselves far and wide, seeking out new spaces where they can thrive and conquer. It's not all bad, though. Many such plants are beautiful, excellent for pollinators, and can give a naturalistic – and naturally dynamic – edge to a space.

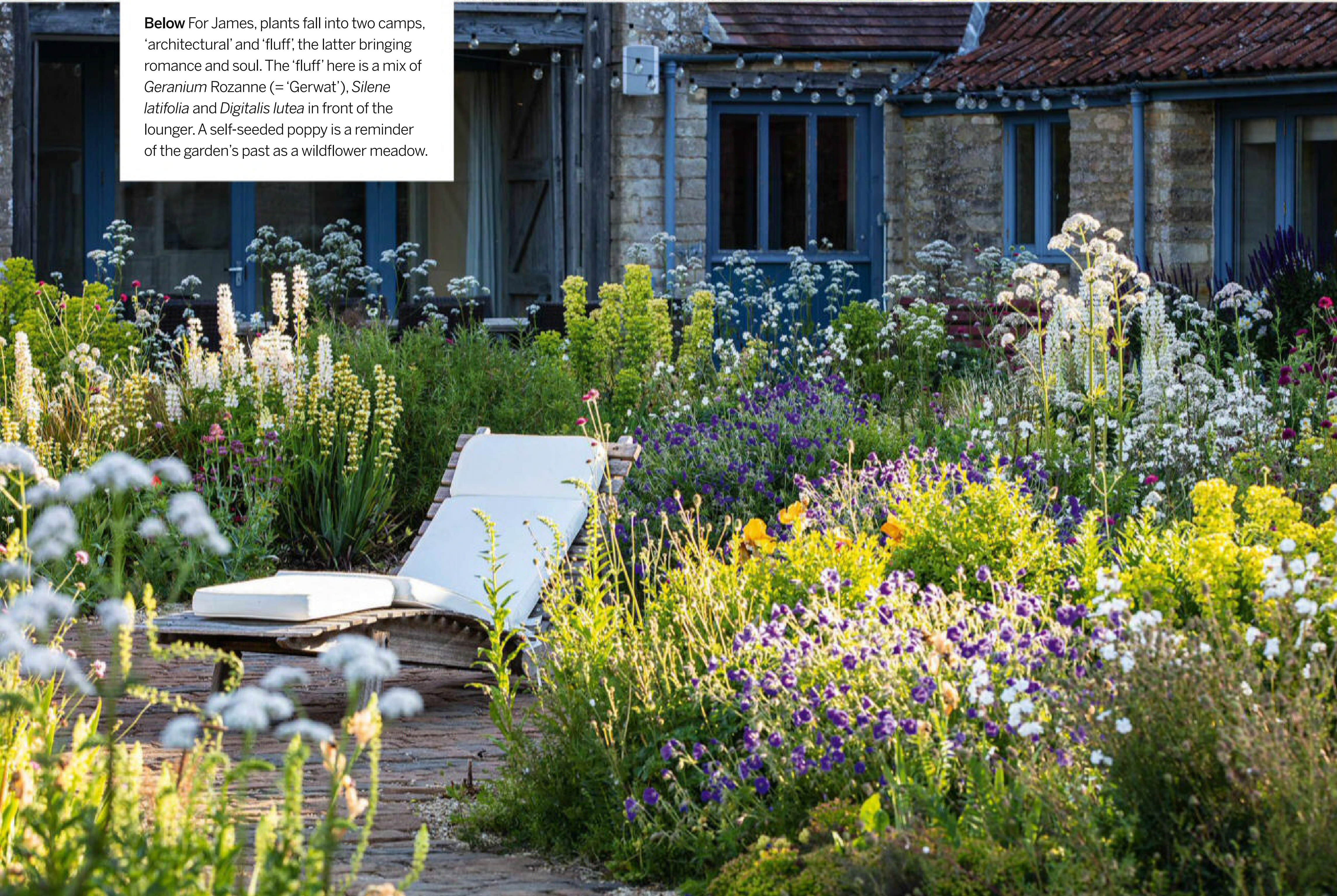
That was what James wanted for the garden of this single-storey barn conversion just outside Tetbury in the Cotswolds. "It's an agricultural building, sitting within proper agricultural land that is constantly changing – from wheat to oilseed rape to ploughed earth," he says. "I wanted to do something that worked within that landscape and didn't jar against it."

Before James's arrival, the owners had tried to make a wildflower meadow in the space that had become, as many such projects do, little more than a patch of weeds. "The idea was good, though,"says James. "The soil was pretty scratchy – stony and rocky, which wildflowers are not averse to – and that romantic, floaty feel of a meadow sat well with the space." James's plan was to achieve a similar effect using plants with a longer season of interest – particularly important as the owner is highly sociable and enjoys entertaining. "If lots of ▷

To continue turn to page 71



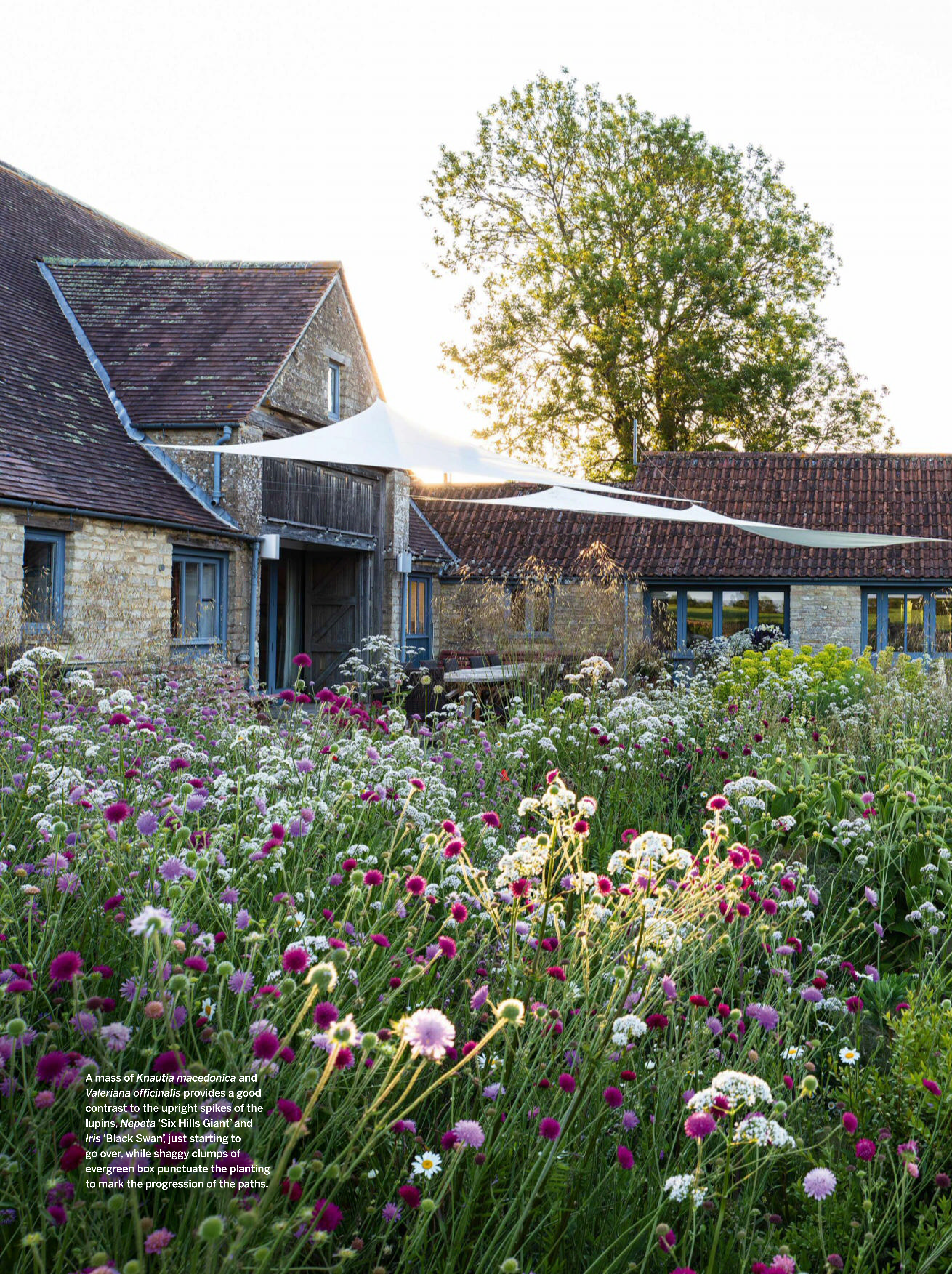
Above The sloping deck provides for easy access into the garden. Its edges are softened by a mass of *Centranthus ruber*, *Penstemon* 'Papal Purple' and self-seeding *Lupinus* 'Noble Maiden'. The tall plumes of *Stipa gigantea* make for a striking focal point without blocking the view beyond.



Below For James, plants fall into two camps, 'architectural' and 'fluff', the latter bringing romance and soul. The 'fluff' here is a mix of *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat'), *Silene latifolia* and *Digitalis lutea* in front of the lounger. A self-seeded poppy is a reminder of the garden's past as a wildflower meadow.

Above *Cynara cardunculus*, *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* and grasses such as *Stipa gigantea* and *Anemanthele lessoniana* add weight and winter interest. The dark foliage in front of the cardoon is *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red', whose pale-pink flowers appear later in summer.

Below The garden is designed for socialising. The space is sunlit for most of the day and is especially magical in the evening when the setting sun illuminates the flowers of the *Stipa gigantea*. Seedheads of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' and *Allium siculum* add further interest.



A mass of *Knautia macedonica* and *Valeriana officinalis* provides a good contrast to the upright spikes of the lupins, *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' and *Iris* 'Black Swan', just starting to go over, while shaggy clumps of evergreen box punctuate the planting to mark the progression of the paths.

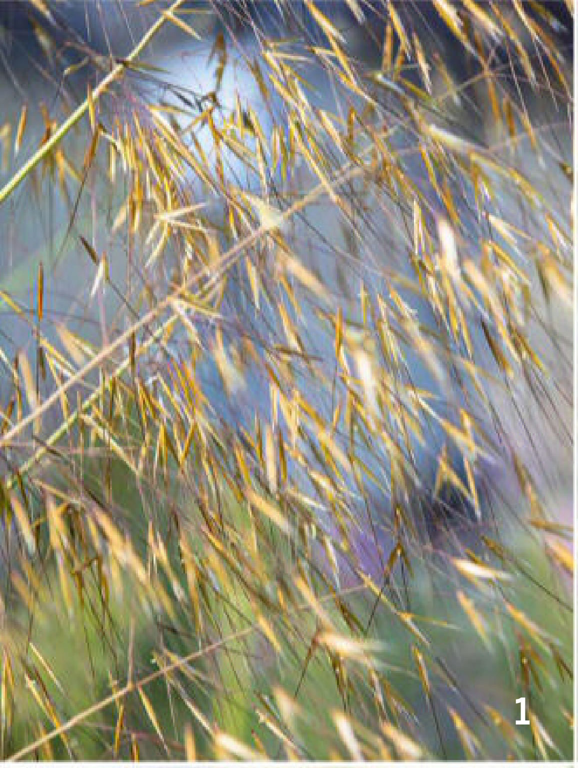
I don't do planting plans; I always change my mind when I'm on site anyway. I prefer to work on the basis that if something is in the wrong place, we'll move it

▷ people are going to come and see it, you want to make sure it looks good for as long as possible," says James.

James divided the space into planting beds with a simple, paved roundel at the centre and a network of radiating paths wide enough to accommodate the owner's wheelchair. He then drew up a list of plants he knew could cope with the conditions and, in his words, "scattered them about the place in a fairly random way. I don't do planting plans as they take a lot of time and then I always change my mind when I'm on site anyway," he laughs. "I prefer to work on the basis that if something is in the wrong place, we'll move it."

Planting was a tough job. To avoid disturbing dormant seeds in the soil, the landscapers chose not to dig the area and used pickaxes to break the ground instead. Once the plants were in, an extra layer of gravel was added to keep moisture in (the garden is never watered, which also encourages stockier, sturdier plants) and to suppress weeds. Even so, in the first couple of years after planting, weeding was a constant. "The area had previously been filled with wildflowers and wildflowers in the wrong place become weeds," says James.

Now, though judicious editing is still required (a gardener comes once a week), the garden has found its level, and after the crocuses, *Iris reticulata* and tulips of spring, it erupts into a stunning, summertime climax with rivers of *Sisyrinchium striatum* and lupins flowing through clumps of *Anemanthele lessoniana*, euphorbia and *Phlomis russeliana*. Crocosmias, eryngiums, *Kniphofia rooperi* and salvias continue the display, with cardoons, shaggy tuffets of box and the phlomis and ▷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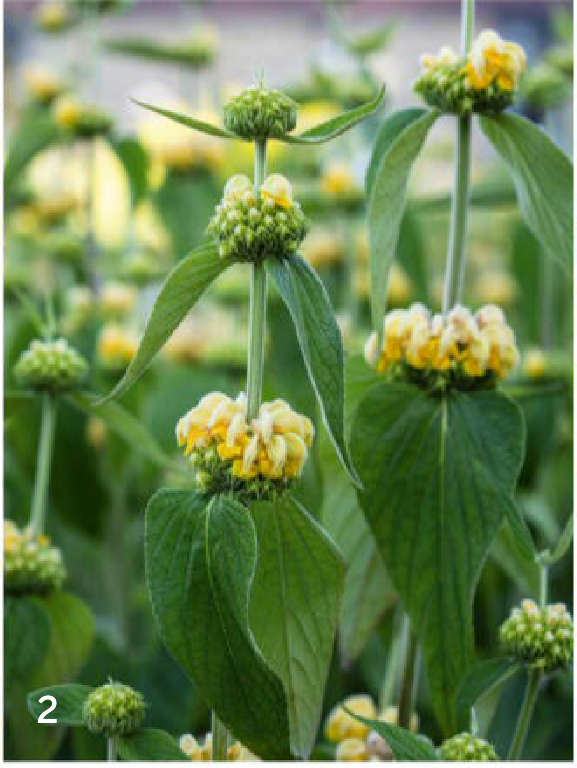
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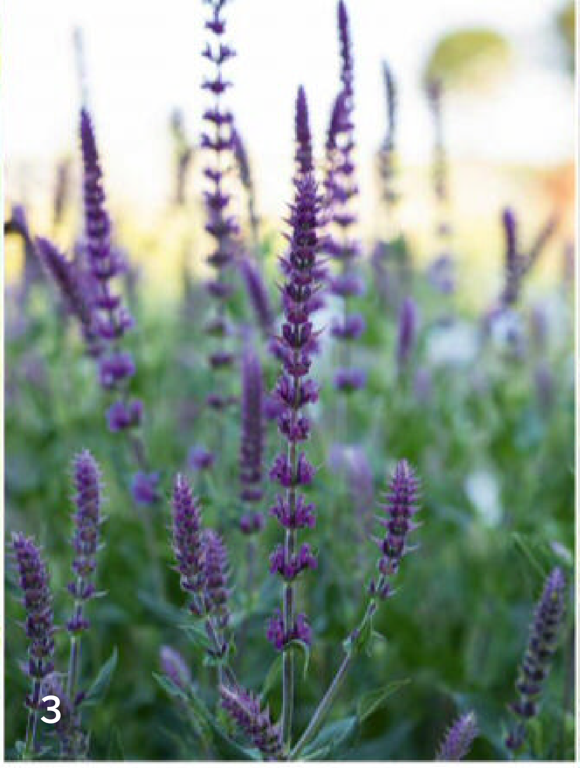
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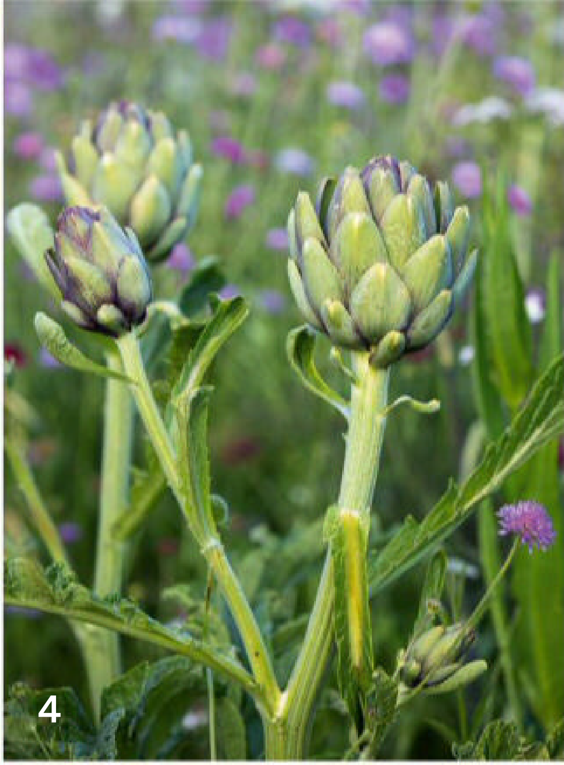
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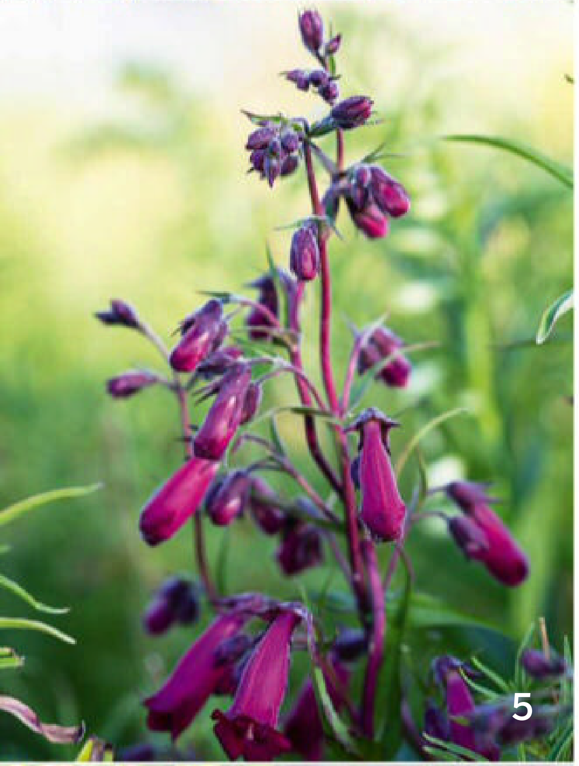
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12 KEY PLANTS

1 *Stipa gigantea*
Always bigger than you expect it to be, this grass needs space to spread and show itself off properly. It catches the light beautifully and is evergreen, too. 2.5m. AGM*. RHS H4†.

2 *Phlomis russeliana*
An ever-reliable plant that will flower in sun or shade and which looks solid and defiant even in the depths of winter. 90cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

3 *Salvia nemorosa* 'Amethyst'
Salvias are so useful flowering for months and needing little attention apart from a chop in midsummer if they're too leggy. This forms a good, upright clump. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.

4 *Cynara cardunculus*
The majestic, silvery leaves look good all year, but do remember to stake the flowerheads, which are very heavy. An excellent plant for bees. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

5 *Penstemon* 'Garnet'
Dark, evergreen foliage and deep-red, tubular flowers that go on forever make this a stalwart of the border. Easy to grow from cuttings and trouble-free. 80cm. RHS H5.

6 *Lupinus* 'Noble Maiden'
A classic, cottage-garden plant that is worth sticking with, despite it being messy in death. Taller plants around it can help detract from the unsightly scene. 90cm. RHS H5.

7 *Euphorbia cyparissias* 'Fens Ruby'
Used throughout the garden to soften the paths, this spurge has the most wonderful colour contrast between its lime-green flowers and glaucous, wine-tinged leaves. 30cm. RHS H7.

8 *Centranthus ruber* var. *coccineus*
Too tall to use as an edging plant, so place this a little further back where it can peep out over its neighbours' heads – though watch it doesn't swamp them. 80cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

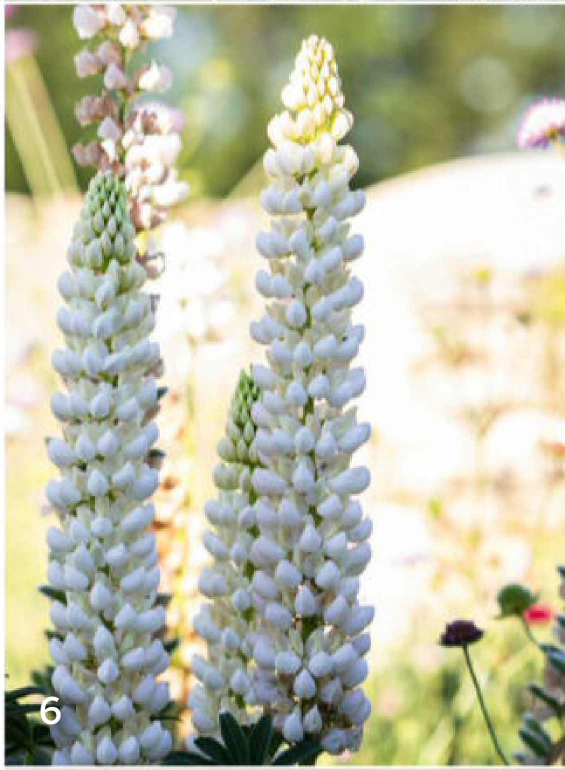
9 *Knautia macedonica*
Rich-crimson buttons floating on thin, wiry stems make this an irresistible addition to the plantings here. It can flop with age, so cut it back in midsummer. 75cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

10 *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'
The umbelliferous flowers work well in semi-wild plantings and are a good contrast to spikier, more upright silhouettes. Edible leaves and seeds are a bonus.1.8m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

11 *Allium siculum*
From the paper-wrapped buds to their explosion of flowers, to their upright-turning, shuttlecock-like seedheads, this plant is fascinating in all its stages. 1.2m. RHS H5.

12 *Silene latifolia*
White campion is a typical meadow plant and so looks right at home in this more sophisticated interpretation. The pretty, divided petals are slightly scented. 75cm. RHS H6.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.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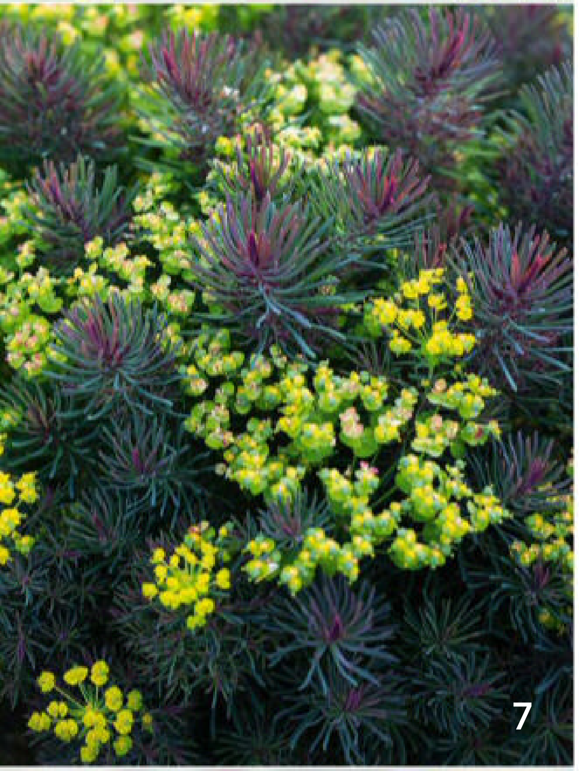
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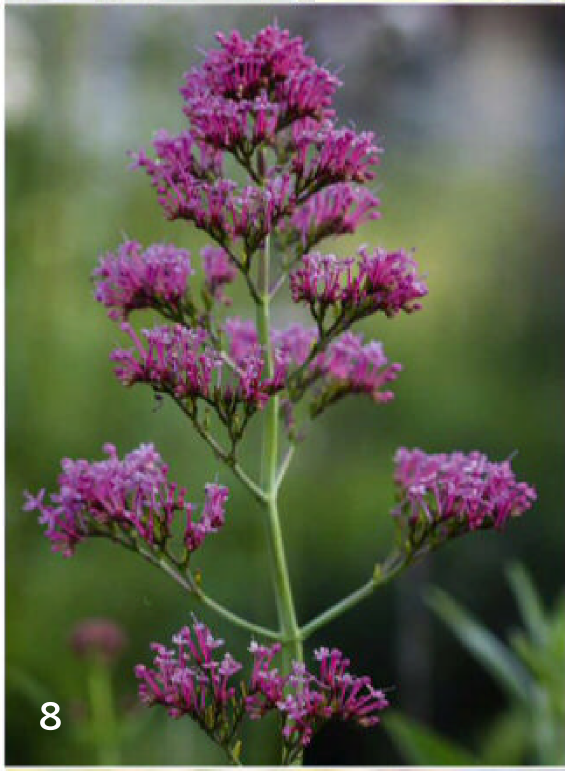
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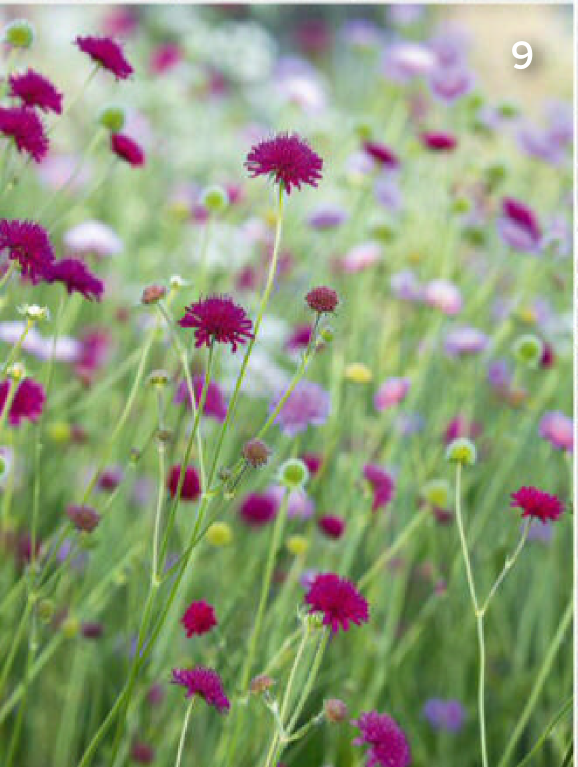
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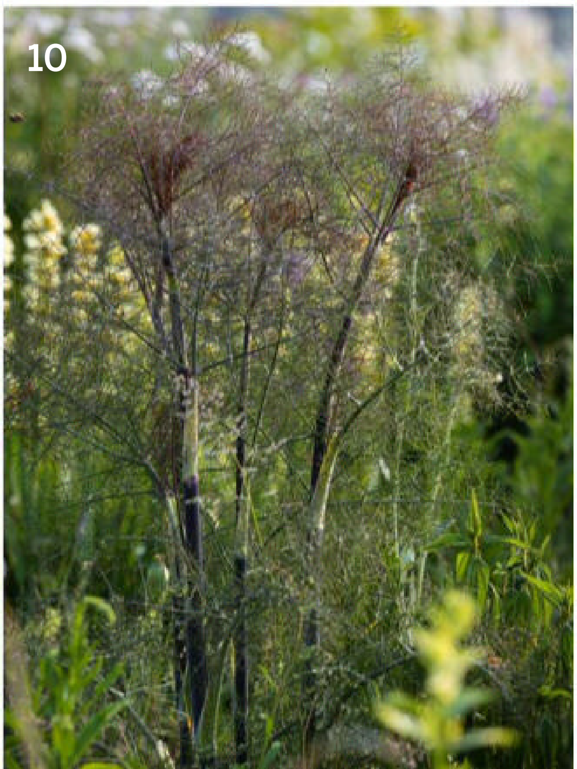
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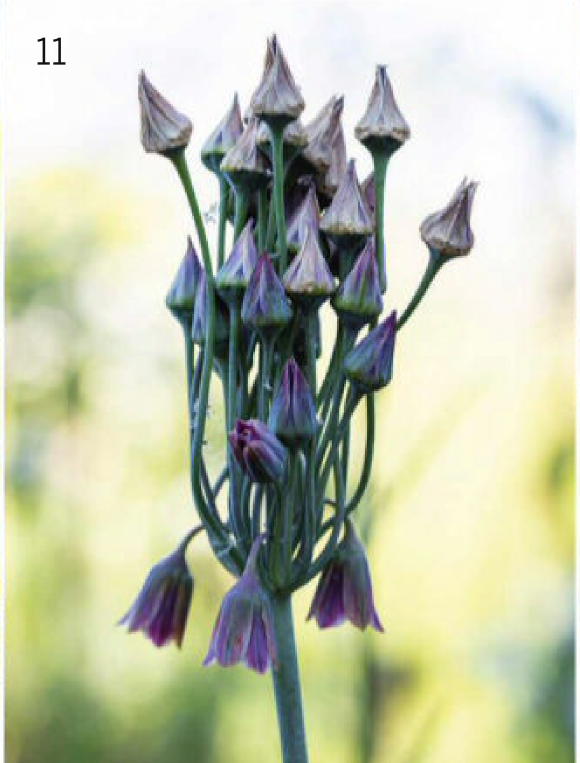
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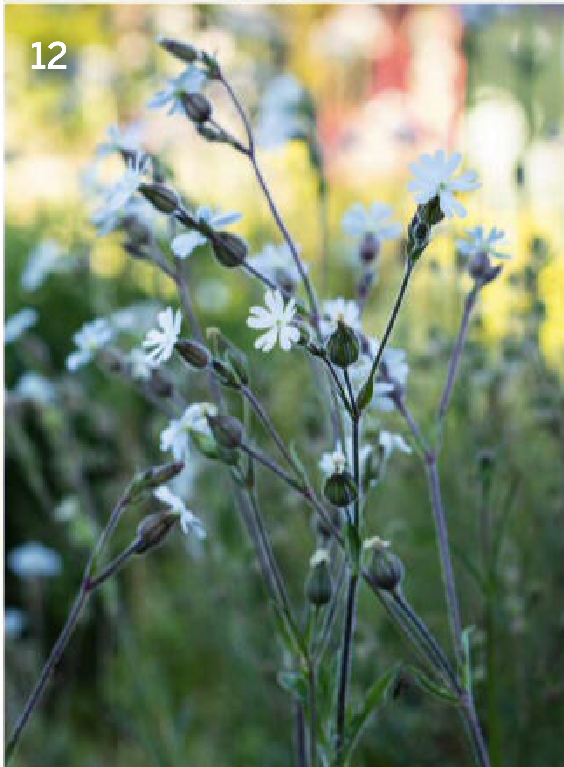
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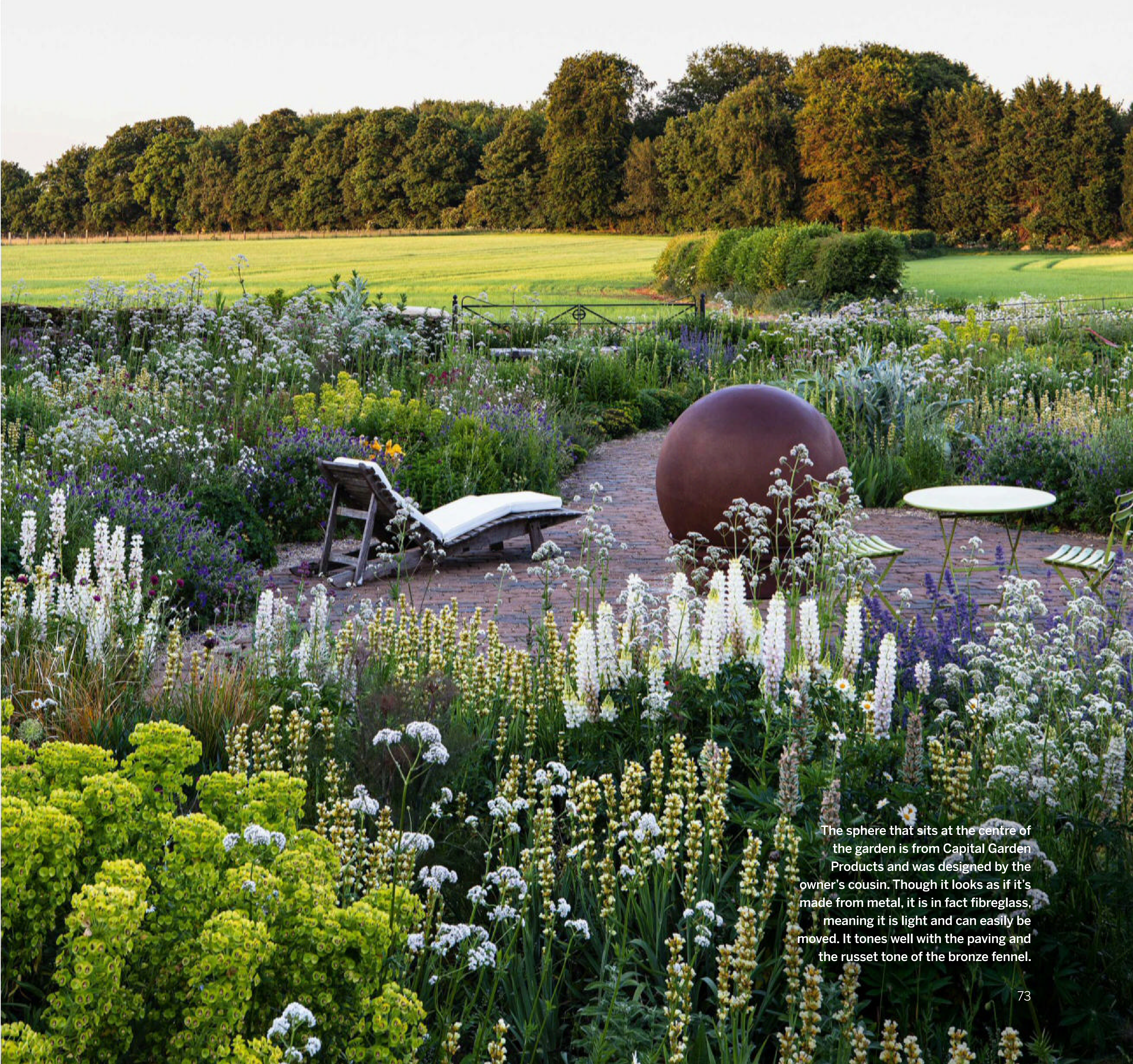
▷ grasses ensuring winter interest. To balance the rather upright nature of many of the plants, James has also included a good number with frothier, more delicate flowers, such as bronze fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'), valerian and centranthus. "They give that hazy romanticism, which is what you need in a garden like this," he says, "even if you swear at them sometimes as they try to take over the world. They do need to be slapped back every so often."

Just as the plants travel and move, so James has embraced the idea of inconstancy in other aspects of the garden. The central sculptural sphere, which looks like metal, is in fact fibreglass, and can easily be shifted to another spot. "The idea is that nothing is sacred," he says. "Everything can be changed."

For the owner, the garden provides a different sense of freedom. The taller plants allow him to slip away and hide – a rare possibility in a wheelchair – and the unexpected beauty of the garden, which ambushes you as you come through the house, makes this a place where people want to be. "When you're in a wheelchair it's much easier for people to come to you than for you to go to them," he says, "so you're trying to create an environment which enables that. People feel they're in a special place here; it touches them." ■

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about James's work at **jamesalexandersinclair.com**



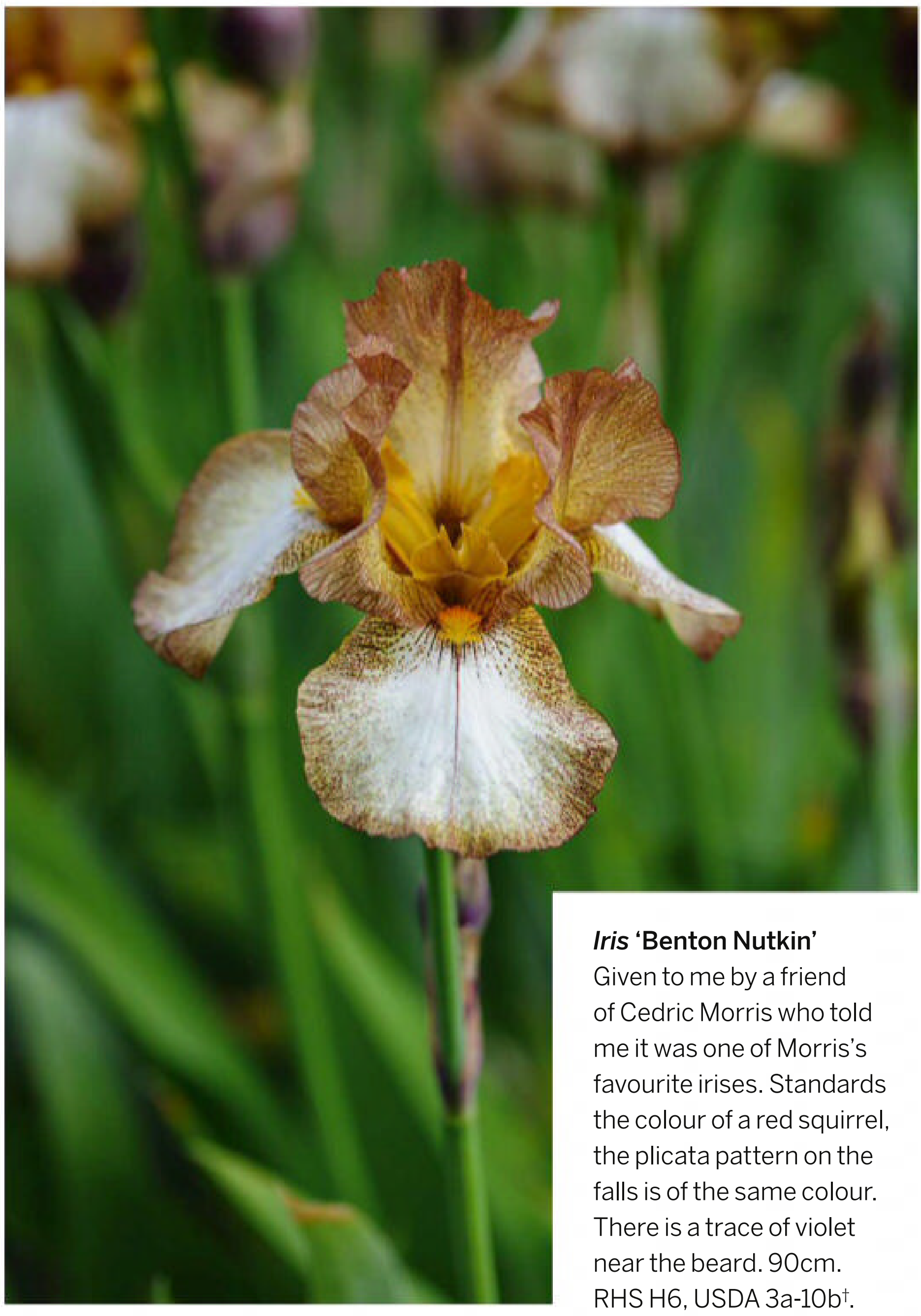
The sphere that sits at the centre of the garden is from Capital Garden Products and was designed by the owner's cousin. Though it looks as if it's made from metal, it is in fact fibreglass, meaning it is light and can easily be moved. It tones well with the paving and the russet tone of the bronze fennel.

A painterly palette

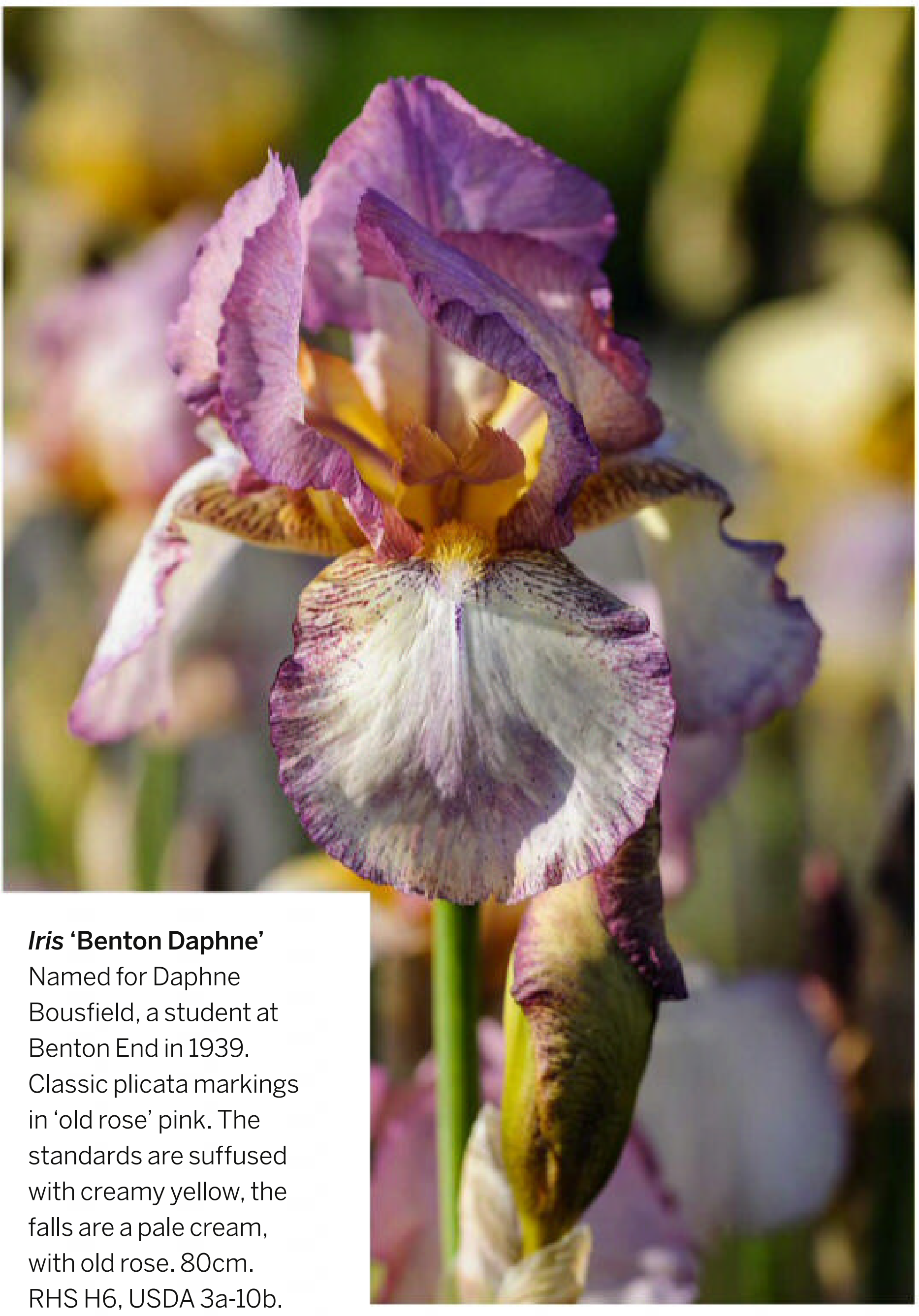
Designer Dan Pearson has long loved the beautiful irises bred by the artist Cedric Morris, and recommends some of the best currently available

WORDS **DAN PEARSON** IRIS CAPTIONS **SARAH COOK** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

Benton End in Suffolk, where the artist and gardener Cedric Morris and his partner Arthur Lett-Haines moved in 1940, is where Morris bred many of his beautiful and painterly coloured bearded irises.



***Iris* 'Benton Nutkin'**
Given to me by a friend of Cedric Morris who told me it was one of Morris's favourite irises. Standards the colour of a red squirrel, the plicata pattern on the falls is of the same colour. There is a trace of violet near the beard. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b[†].



***Iris* 'Benton Daphne'**
Named for Daphne Bousfield, a student at Benton End in 1939. Classic plicata markings in 'old rose' pink. The standards are suffused with creamy yellow, the falls are a pale cream, with old rose. 80cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

I first encountered the Benton irises about ten years ago when visiting the iris fields of Woottens of Wenhaston in Suffolk. At the time I had just moved to Somerset and had a south-facing, free-draining slope to experiment with so, in the spirit of getting-to-know, I chose 56 of the hundreds of bearded iris that fluttered in the fields and lined them out to trial. As I whittled the numbers down over the next three years, it was the Benton irises, with their very particular colour palette and form, that repeatedly spoke to me. In the words of the man who had selected them, it was their 'elegance, pride and delicacy' that set them apart, but also their mutable colouring, with 'breaks' as delicate as the speckling on a bird's egg, that drew me in to wanting to know more.

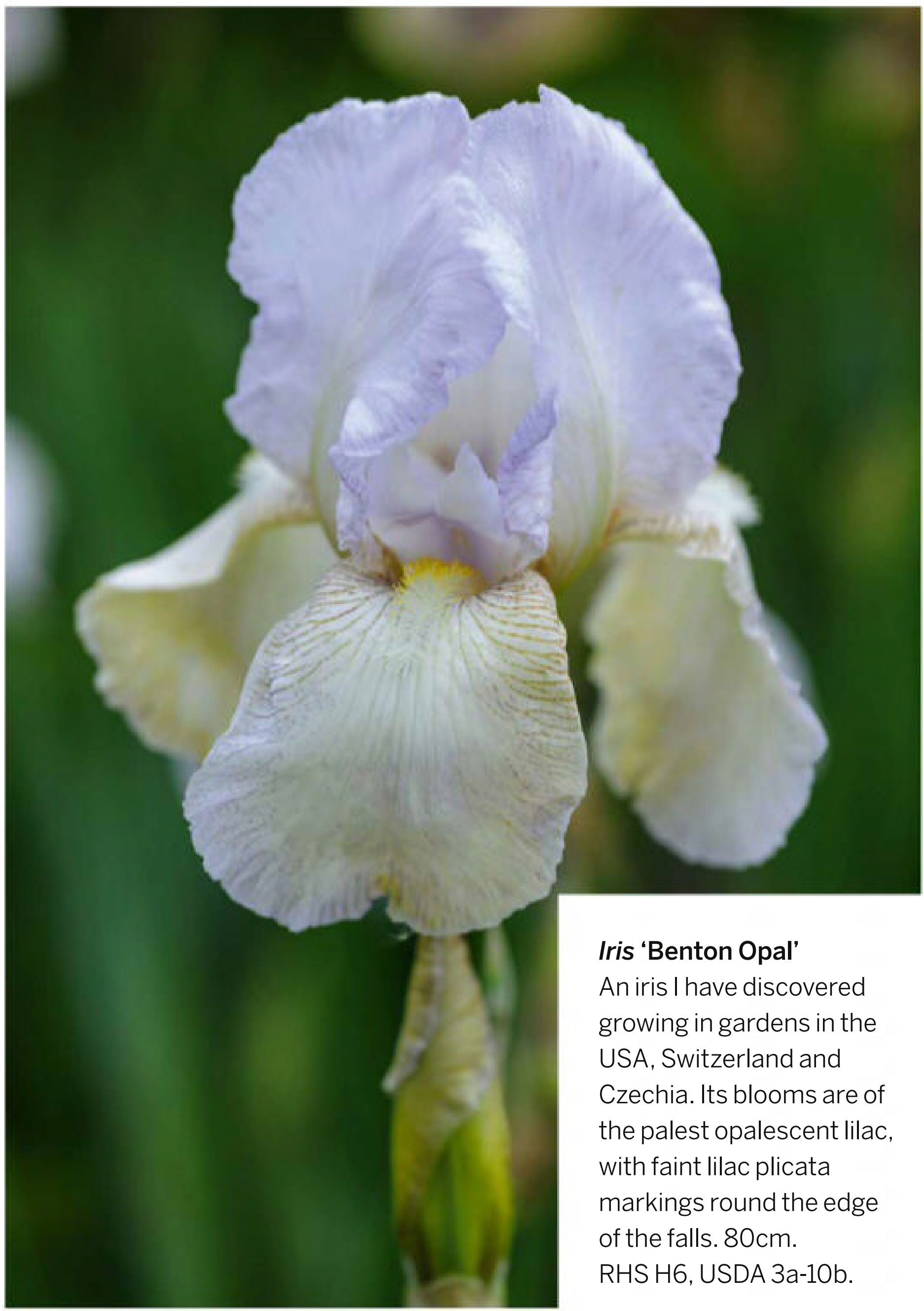
That man was Cedric Morris, a painter in Cornwall and Paris before founding the East Anglian School of Painting in 1937 with his partner, Arthur Lett-Haines – the young Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling were among their pupils. But Morris was also a plantsman and gardener of considerable note. He had an impeccable eye for a good plant and his artist's eye lives on in a number of species that he spent time refining. And in recent years his range of bearded iris has seen something of a revival.

In 1935 Morris made a visit to see the work of iris breeder Angus Wilson and it was from this point on that he began his own process of selection. He made deliberate crosses from a pair of tall, bearded iris parents, growing as many as a 1,000 seedlings a year. Choosing a pair of specific parents such as 'San Francisco' for good edging or 'Sacramento' for height, he learned through a process of refinement. Noting their strengths and weaknesses, he discarded those that had bloodlines prone to rhizome rot or weak stems and honed the plicatas, a term used to describe the patterning of stitched, stippled or banded markings that contrast with the base colour of the petals.

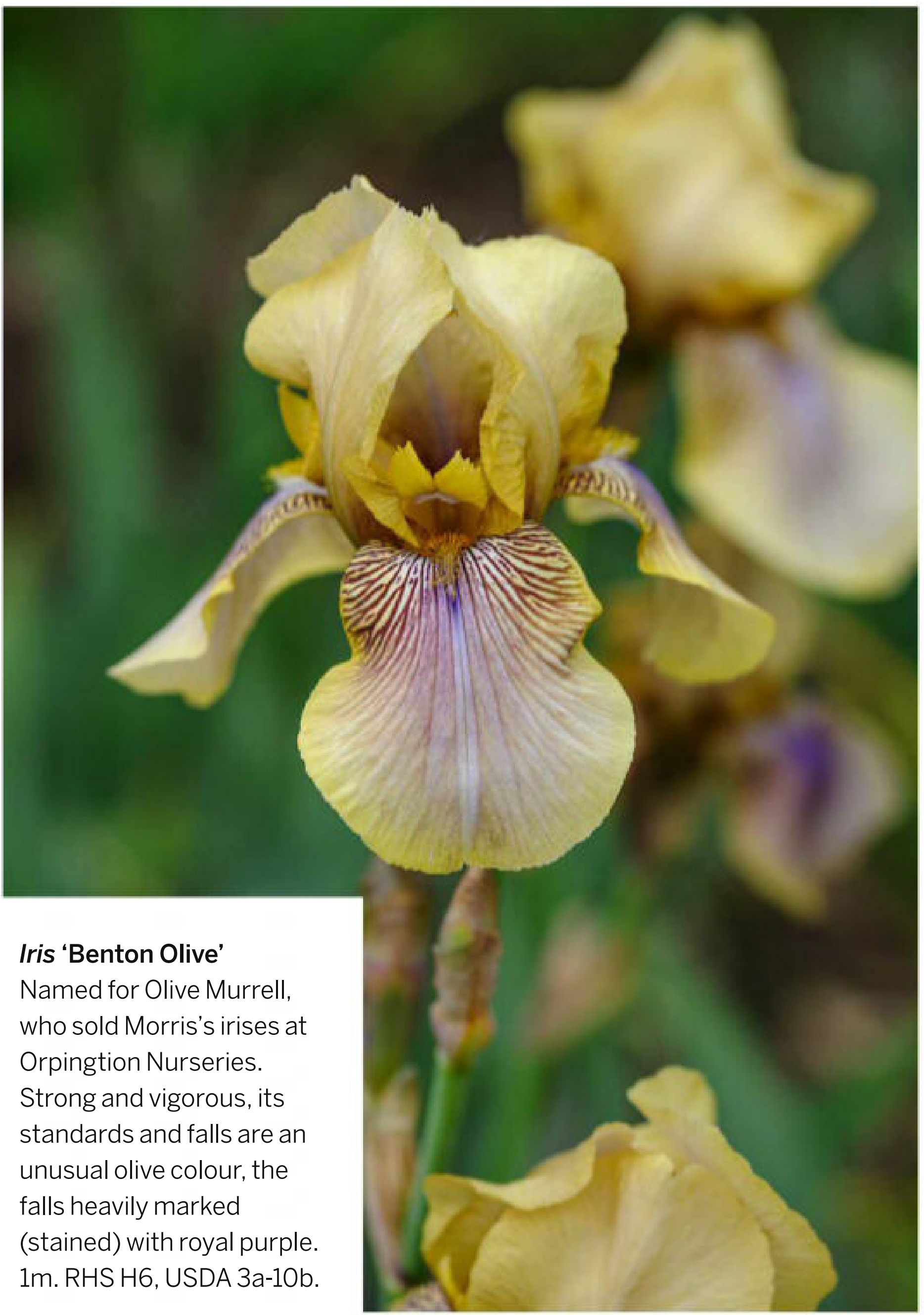
Morris and Lett-Haines moved to Benton End in 1940, bringing with them from their previous garden at The Pound a burgeoning collection. A series of images taken in 1947-48 for *Country Life* show the irises grouped en masse in the lower parts of the garden, but they were later moved and grown in number around the house. This may have been because iris like new ground every ten years, but it might also reflect the plants that one imagines were closest to Cedric's heart.

When Sarah Cook (who has supplied the captions here) left the role of head gardener at Sissinghurst Castle in 2004, she made it her mission to bring as many as possible of the collection back into cultivation. Vita Sackville-West was friends with Cedric and inevitably, there were Benton irises in the gardens at Sissinghurst. Of the 90 that were named Sarah has found 25 Morris introductions with good provenance, and five more that await further verification. She has read every ▷

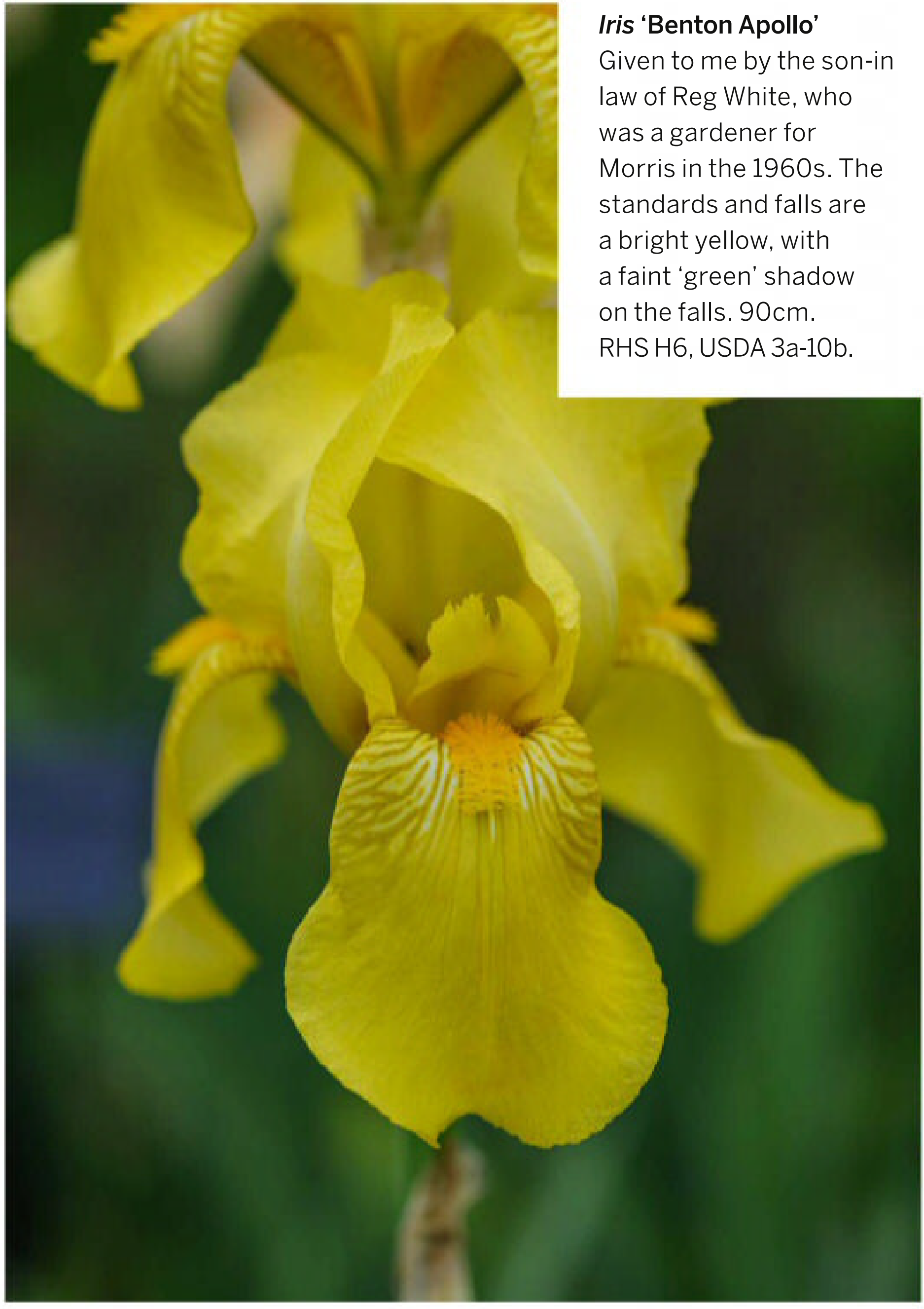
To continue turn to page 81



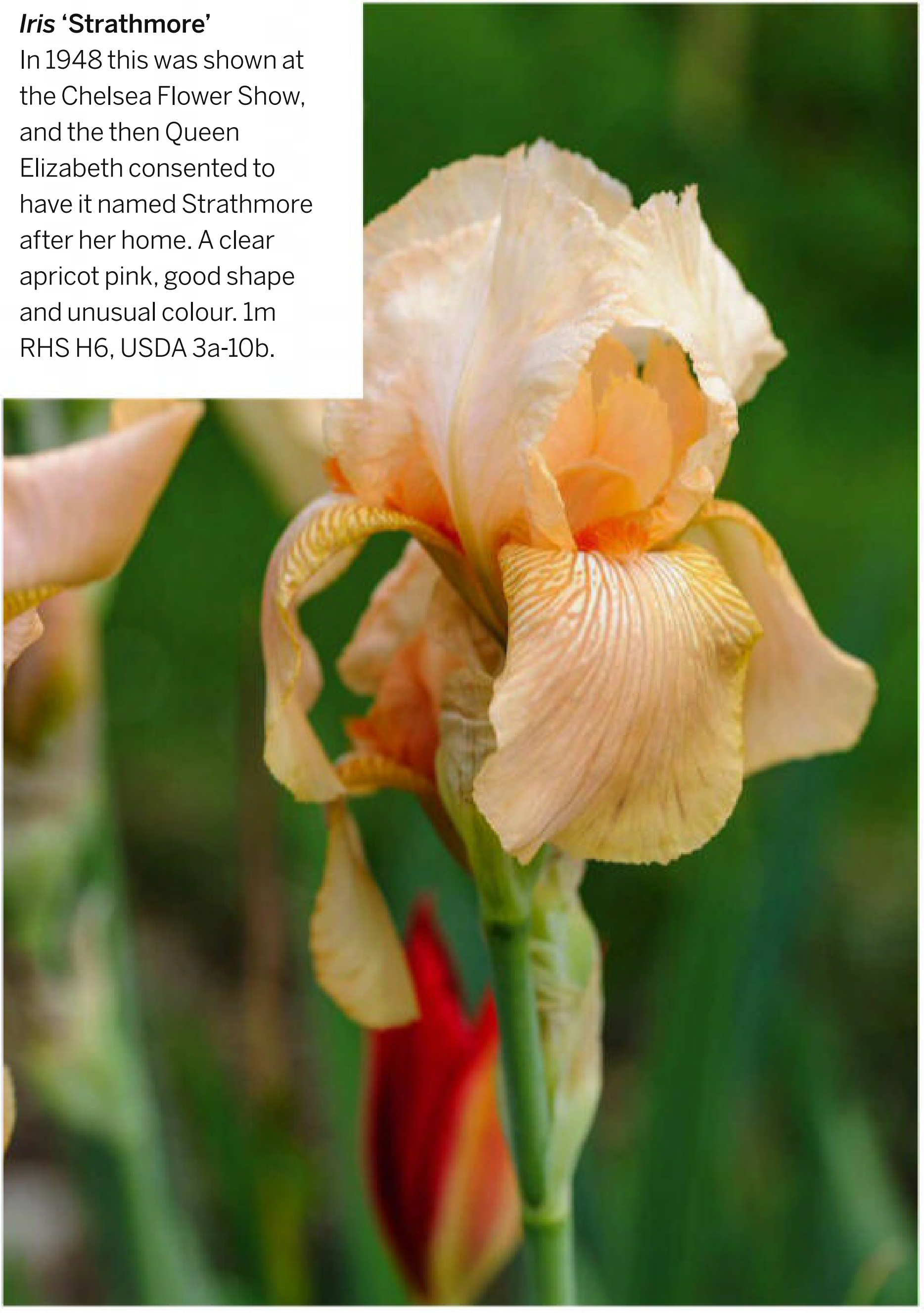
***Iris* ‘Benton Opal’**
An iris I have discovered growing in gardens in the USA, Switzerland and Czechia. Its blooms are of the palest opalescent lilac, with faint lilac plicata markings round the edge of the falls. 80cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



***Iris* ‘Benton Olive’**
Named for Olive Murrell, who sold Morris’s irises at Orpingtion Nurseries. Strong and vigorous, its standards and falls are an unusual olive colour, the falls heavily marked (stained) with royal purple. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

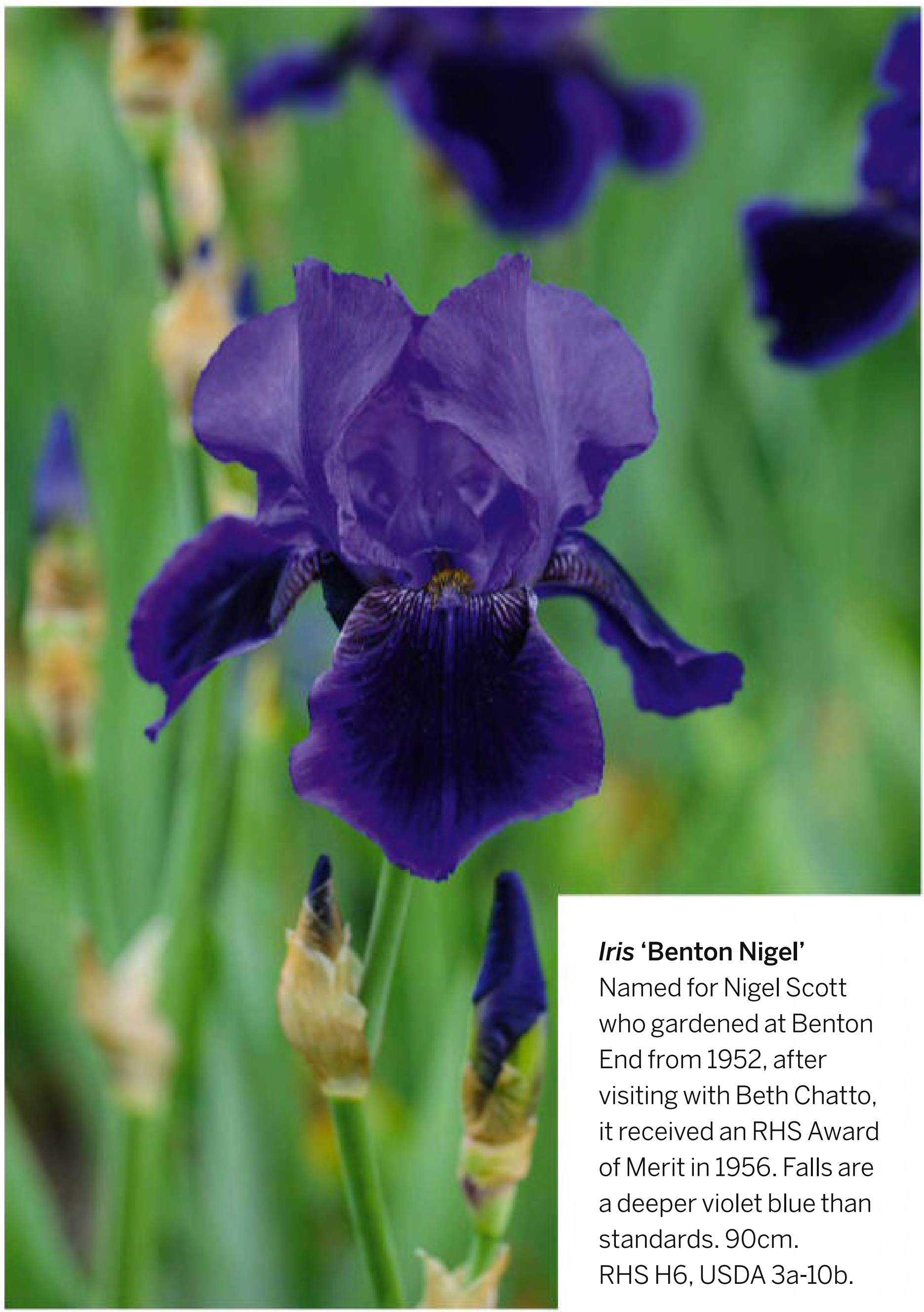


***Iris* ‘Benton Apollo’**
Given to me by the son-in law of Reg White, who was a gardener for Morris in the 1960s. The standards and falls are a bright yellow, with a faint ‘green’ shadow on the falls. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

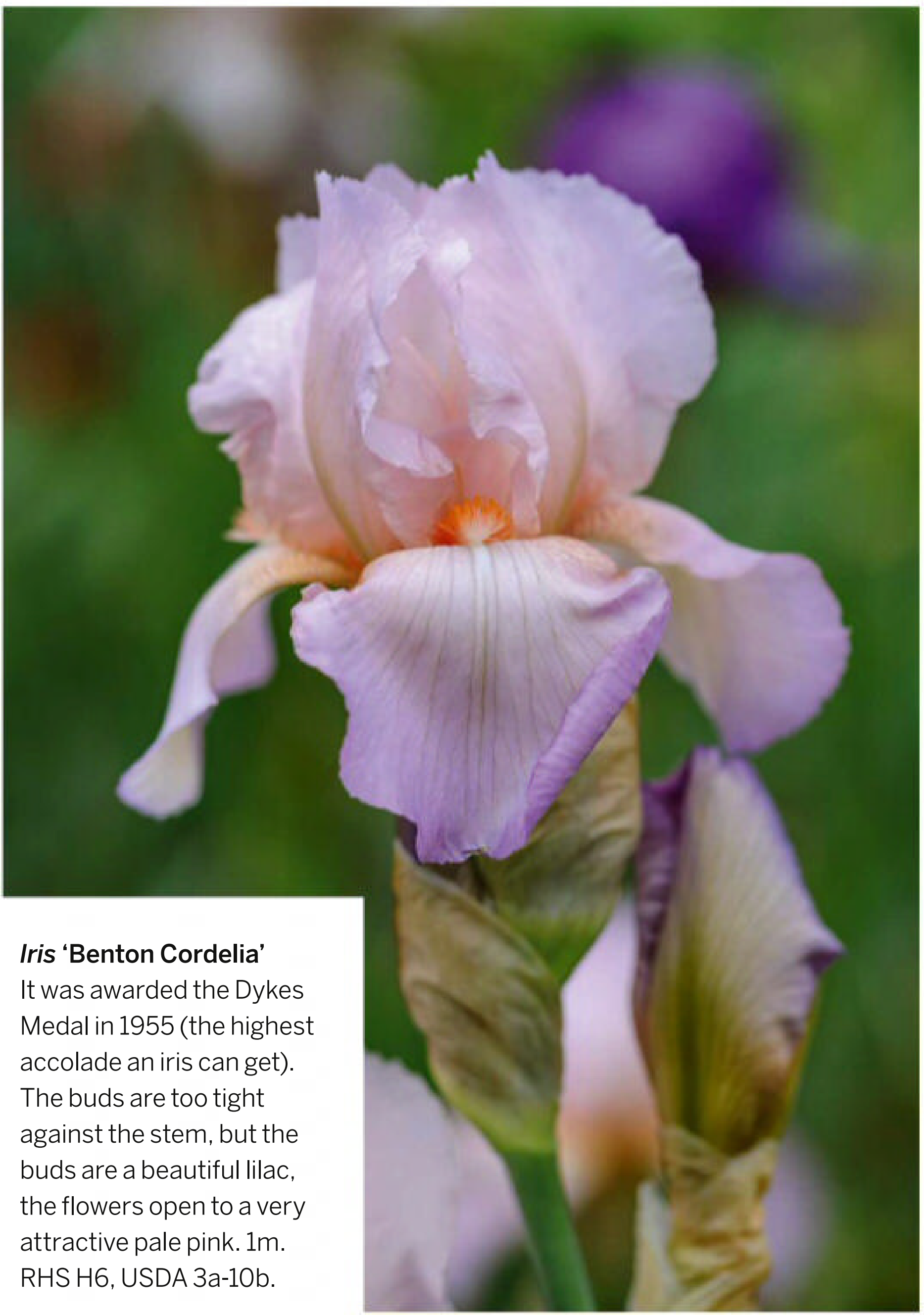


***Iris* ‘Strathmore’**
In 1948 this was shown at the Chelsea Flower Show, and the then Queen Elizabeth consented to have it named Strathmore after her home. A clear apricot pink, good shape and unusual colour. 1m RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

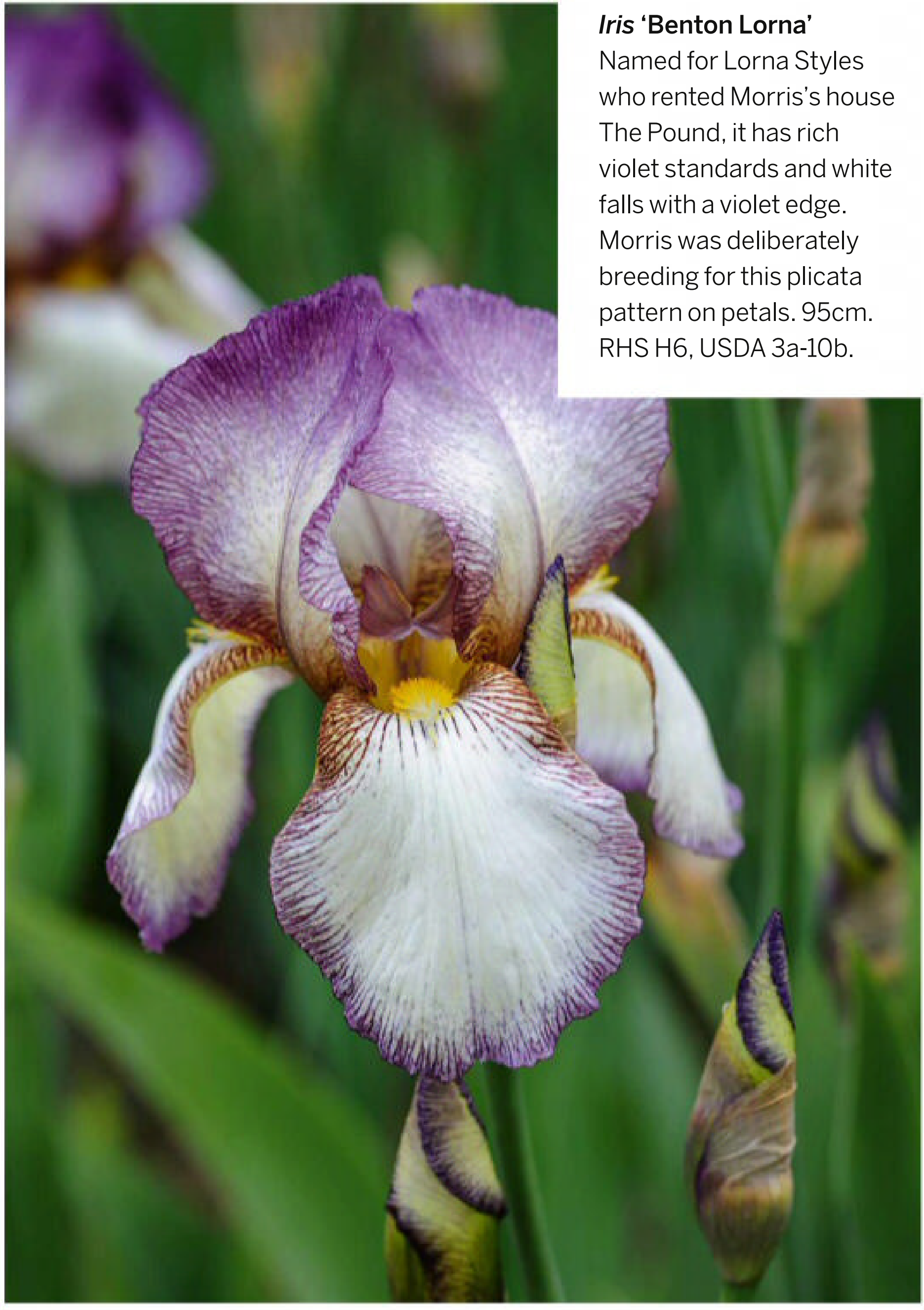
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



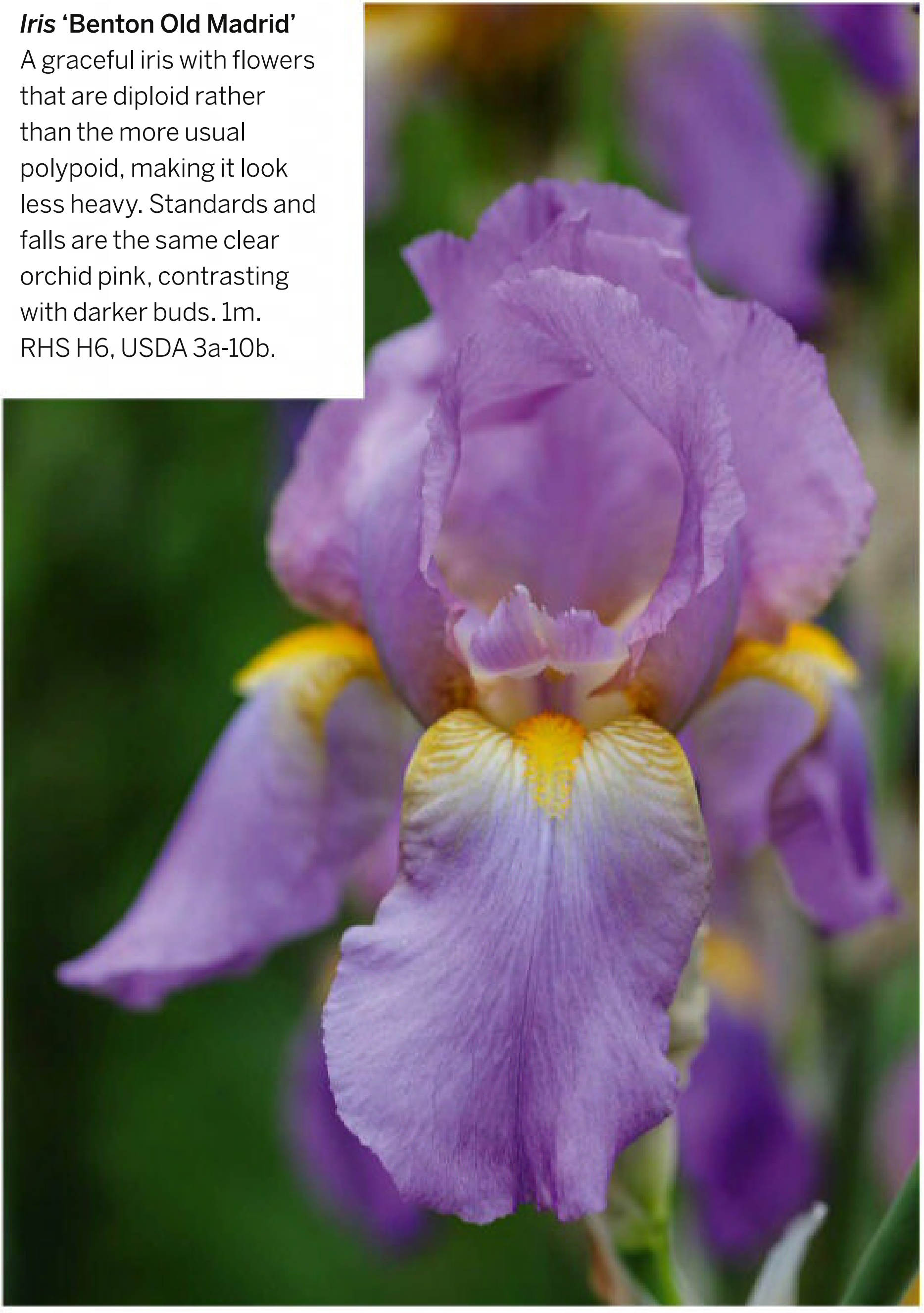
***Iris* ‘Benton Nigel’**
Named for Nigel Scott who gardened at Benton End from 1952, after visiting with Beth Chatto, it received an RHS Award of Merit in 1956. Falls are a deeper violet blue than standards. 90cm.
RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



***Iris* ‘Benton Cordelia’**
It was awarded the Dykes Medal in 1955 (the highest accolade an iris can get). The buds are too tight against the stem, but the buds are a beautiful lilac, the flowers open to a very attractive pale pink. 1m.
RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



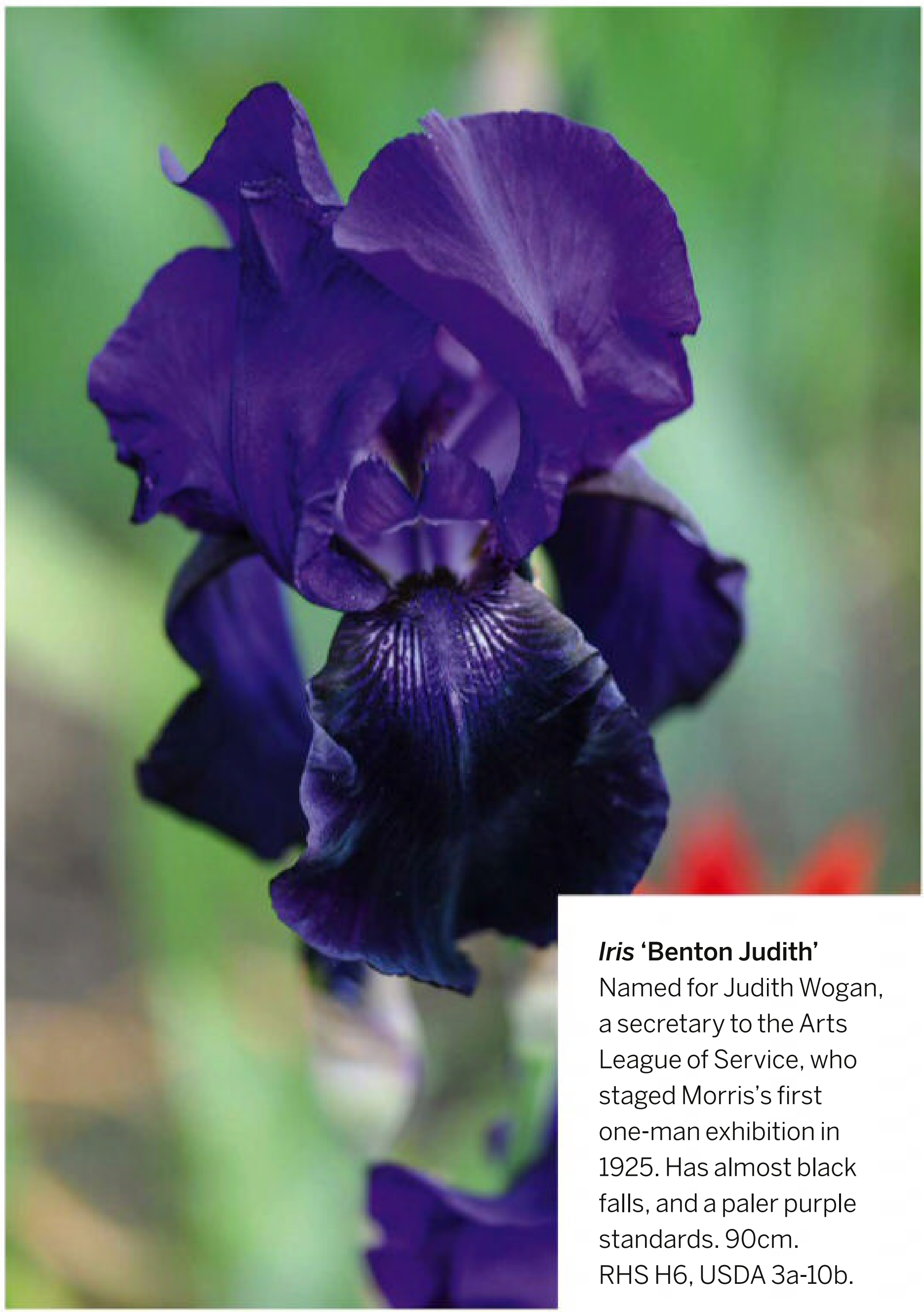
***Iris* ‘Benton Lorna’**
Named for Lorna Styles who rented Morris’s house The Pound, it has rich violet standards and white falls with a violet edge. Morris was deliberately breeding for this plicata pattern on petals. 95cm.
RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

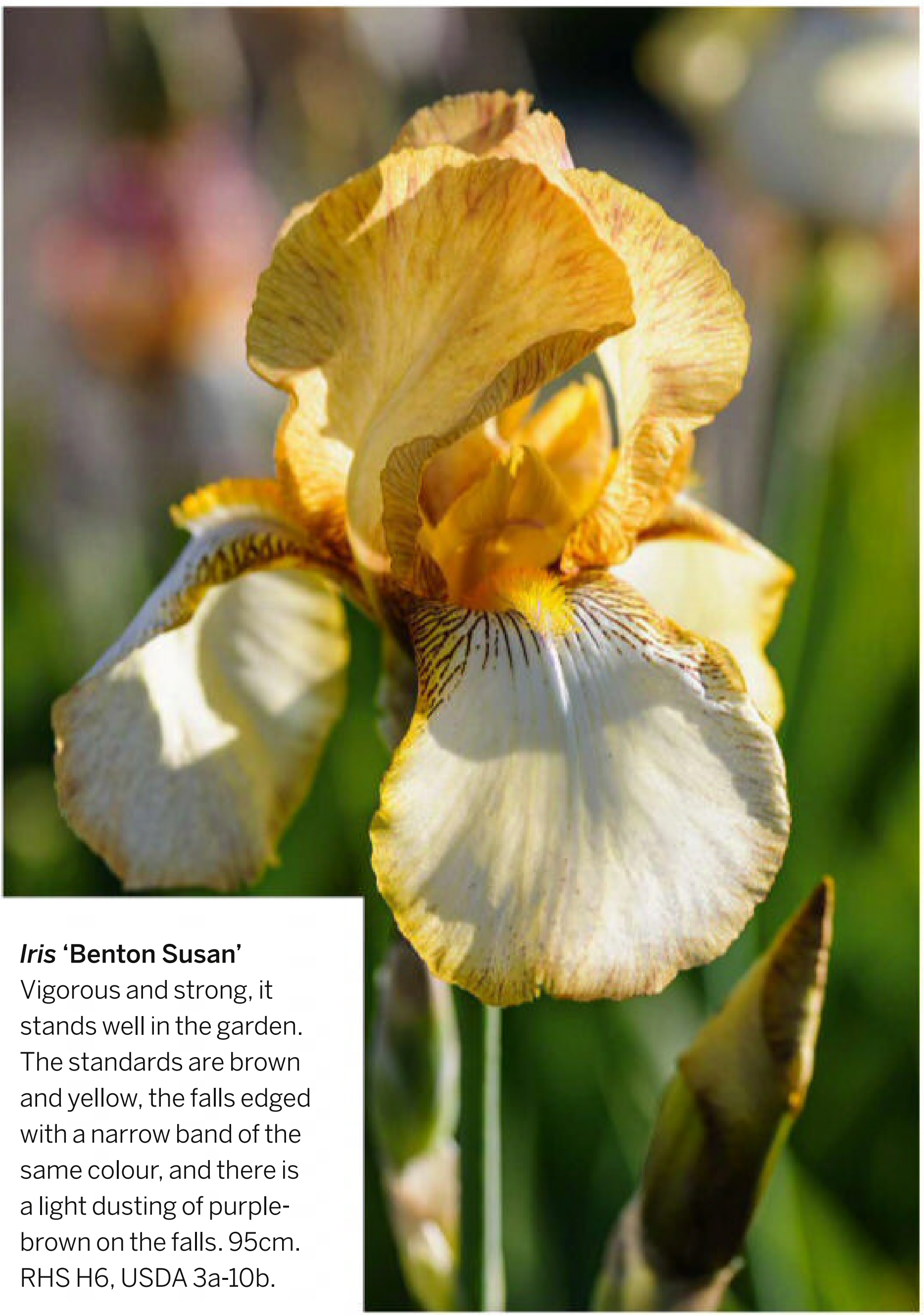


***Iris* ‘Benton Old Madrid’**
A graceful iris with flowers that are diploid rather than the more usual polypoid, making it look less heavy. Standards and falls are the same clear orchid pink, contrasting with darker buds. 1m.
RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

Since leaving her job as Sissinghurst's head gardener, Sarah Cook has devoted much time and energy into tracking down the Benton irises and making them available for many more gardeners to enjoy.

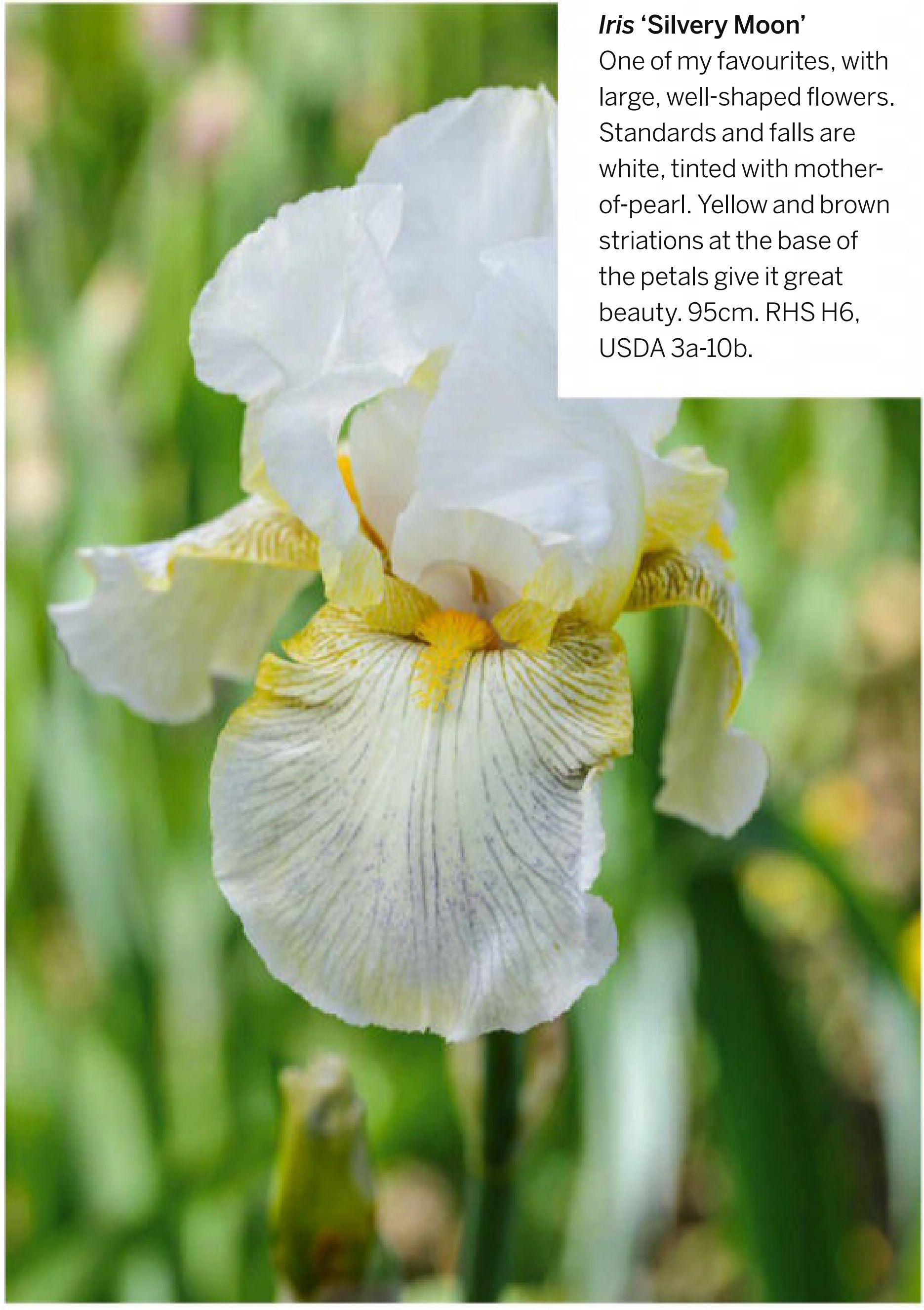
> Morris had an impeccable eye for a good plant and his artist's eye lives on in a number of species that he spent time refining

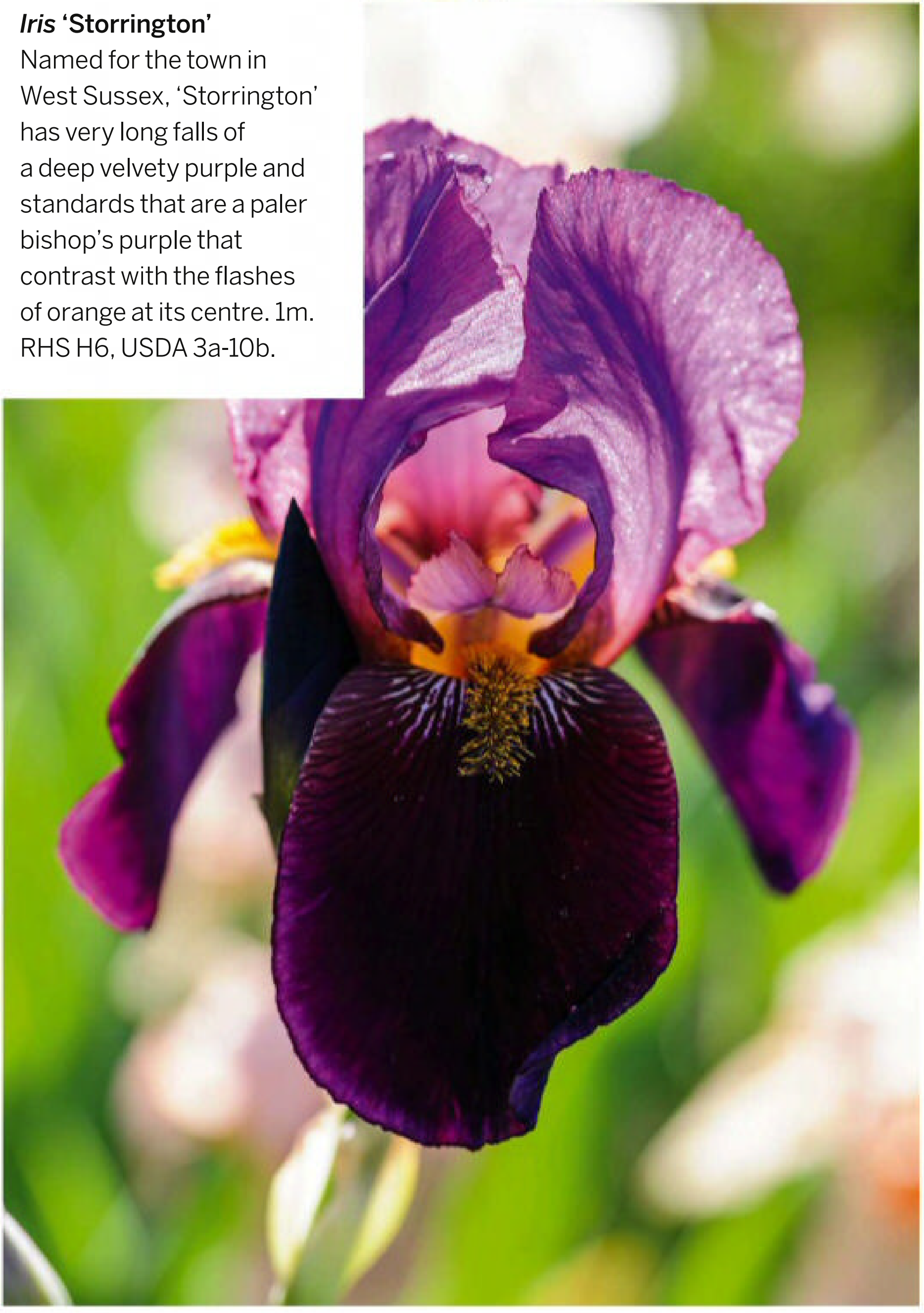




Iris ‘Benton Judith’
Named for Judith Wogan, a secretary to the Arts League of Service, who staged Morris’s first one-man exhibition in 1925. Has almost black falls, and a paler purple standards. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

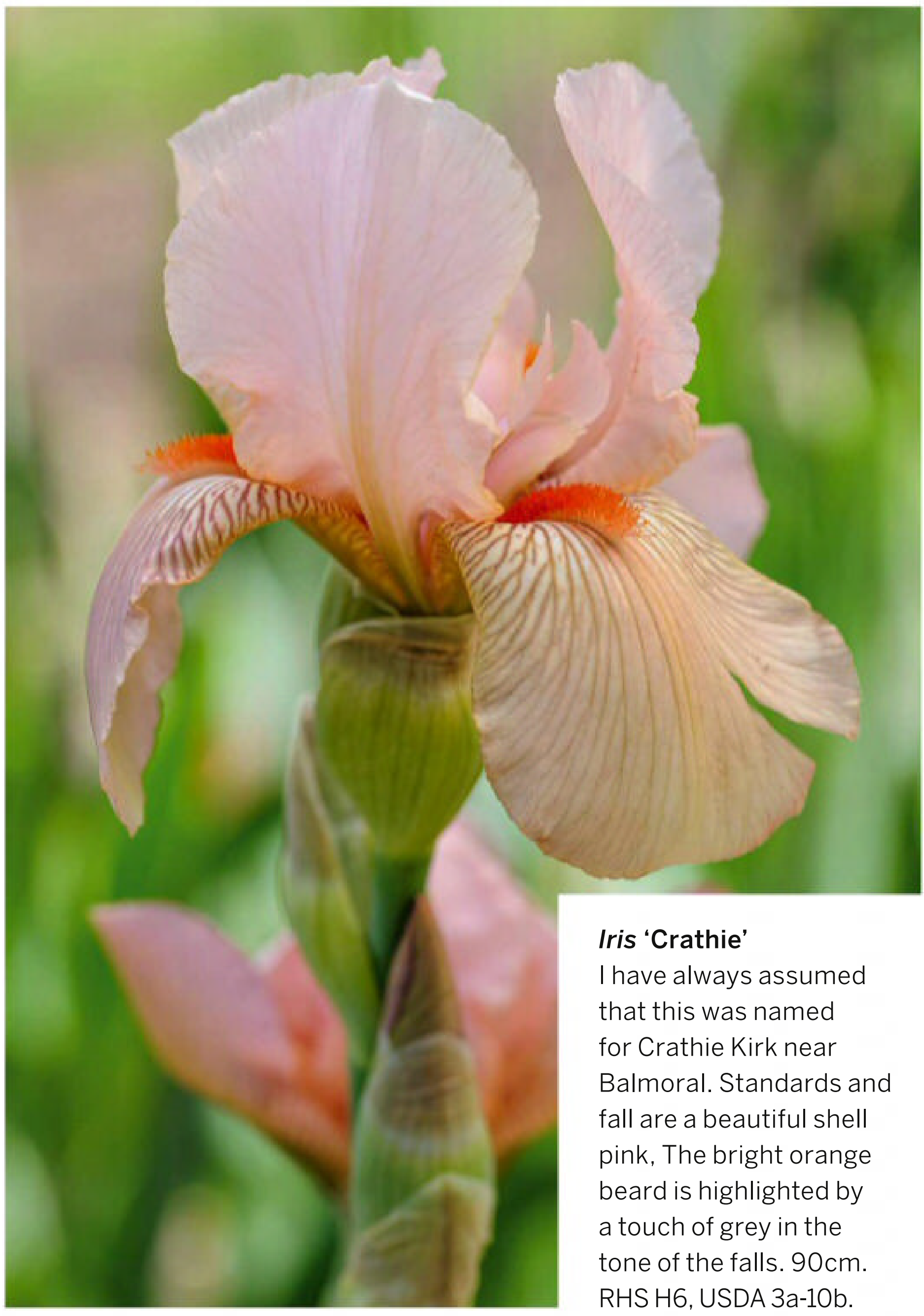
Iris ‘Benton Susan’
Vigorous and strong, it stands well in the garden. The standards are brown and yellow, the falls edged with a narrow band of the same colour, and there is a light dusting of purple-brown on the falls. 95cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



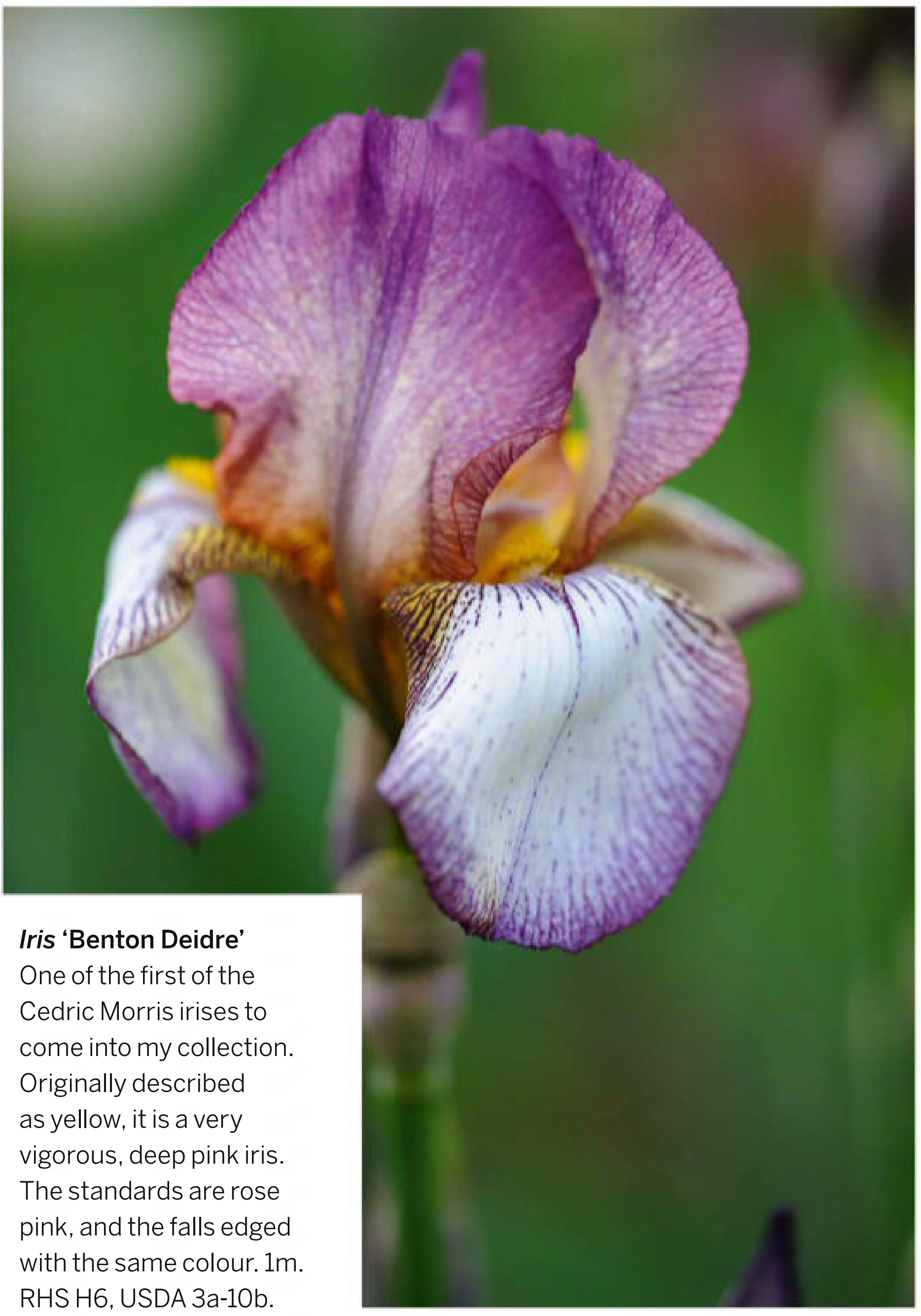


Iris ‘Silvery Moon’
One of my favourites, with large, well-shaped flowers. Standards and falls are white, tinted with mother-of-pearl. Yellow and brown striations at the base of the petals give it great beauty. 95cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

Iris ‘Storrington’
Named for the town in West Sussex, ‘Storrington’ has very long falls of a deep velvety purple and standards that are a paler bishop’s purple that contrast with the flashes of orange at its centre. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



***Iris* ‘Crathie’**
I have always assumed that this was named for Crathie Kirk near Balmoral. Standards and fall are a beautiful shell pink, The bright orange beard is highlighted by a touch of grey in the tone of the falls. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



***Iris* ‘Benton Deidre’**
One of the first of the Cedric Morris irises to come into my collection. Originally described as yellow, it is a very vigorous, deep pink iris. The standards are rose pink, and the falls edged with the same colour. 1m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

▷ 1935 to 1966 and her search for Benton irises has led her from the bookshelves of the RHS Lindley Library via the early catalogues of Orpington and Wallace Nurseries to plants that had survived across the Atlantic and Pacific.

To ensure the Bentons became available again Sarah gave a collection to David Howard of Howard’s Nurseries in Norfolk, where he amassed enough plants to exhibit at Chelsea in 2015. They had already surfaced as favourites in my own collection, but when I saw Cedric’s sophisticated eye across the full range I come closer to understanding this gifted plantsman through the plants he had honed and selected. ❏

WHERE TO BUY

Beth Chatto Gardens Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB. Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk

Woottens of Wenhaston The Iris Field, Hall Road, Wenhaston, Suffolk IP19 9HF. Tel 01502 478258, woottensplants.com

HOW TO GROW

Hailing from the magnesium-rich limestone of the Dolomites, the rhizomatous iris needs plenty of sunshine and free drainage. Though adaptable as garden plants, it is worth giving them a position in full sun where they will not be overshadowed. They prefer not to have companions so that they can harvest all the light, and are best grown alone to the front of a bed where they can bask or, as I grow them, at the foot of a sunny wall.

Their early growth and rush towards May flowering is made possible by the energy from the previous summer that is stored in the root. During flowering however, their whole root system dies and the plants go into a period of semi-dormancy in June and July after setting seed. The majority of the foliage at this point will wither and can be pulled away to allow good air circulation and light to fall on the rhizome. It is at this point and on a five to six year rotation that they need to be split. A single rhizome and fan of foliage should be taken from the outside of the clump and replanted with the rhizome at soil level, not covered, and the foliage angled like a deck chair with the body of the rhizome in the sun.

Sarah Cook moves her whole collection after two divisions, keeping them for no more than ten years in one piece of ground. Left for longer in one place and they will begin to dwindle as they deplete the micronutrients that are essential to the effort they put into flowering. For best results feed lightly (around 60g for every square metre) with a general purpose fertiliser, such as Vitax Q4, twice in a season. First in March to stimulate flowers and then in July to encourage the root growth.

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

JO THOMPSON

The award-winning garden designer on a childhood divided between Rome and Dorset, loving the New Romantics and creating gardens in which people long to spend time

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Don't be fooled by appearances. Slight, pretty and endlessly charming, Jo Thompson is also one of the most determined people you will ever meet. How else could a divorced mother of two have turned herself into an internationally renowned award-winning garden designer in just 20 years?

Jo learned the importance of hard work from her father, an Italian cocktail waiter from the Rome of *La Dolce Vita* who came to this country in search of adventure and went on to build a chain of Italian restaurants in southwest England. As a child, Jo divided her time between Rome, where she was fascinated by the classical architecture, and school in Poole, Dorset. "I was quite a swotty girl," she says. "At least until the age of 14, when I discovered Simon Le Bon and the New Romantics."

> A GARDEN DOESN'T NEED TO LOOK LIKE IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE, BUT IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE IT COULD BE THERE FOREVER

Despite the distractions of Duran Duran, Jo won a place at UCL to read Modern Languages, and had a wonderful time learning about the history, art and literature of Italy and France, as well as grammar and syntax. After graduation she briefly worked for an Italian man who manufactured dresses for the designer Jasper Conran – "I got paid in sample size clothing, which only fitted because I couldn't afford to eat" – then began a PhD at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge exploring the work of Absurdist playwright and novelist Pirandello.

In a plot twist that Pirandello would have appreciated, a lack of funds forced her to switch to teacher training and a brief career in London schools, before marriage and impending motherhood led a pregnant Jo to cross the road from her Maida Vale flat and ask the staff at Clifton Nurseries how she could improve her tiny roof terrace. "It was a lightbulb moment. In just a couple of windy days those guys transformed the blank canvas of our roof into a whole new world, and sowed the seeds of my future."

By the time her baby was six weeks old, Jo was so desperate for a proper garden that she relocated the family to Kent and was soon obsessed with David Austin's rose catalogue and the writings of Christopher Lloyd. A couple of years and another baby later, Jo signed up for the English Gardening School design course and discovered her calling in life.

"In 2000 I designed a garden for a friend, word got around, and everything suddenly snowballed. Since my marriage had broken up, leaving me with two tiny children to support, I took on every bit of work that came my way. Fortunately, 20 years ago I had more energy."

In a world that includes some pretty big egos wielding the heavy stamp of design, Jo won a loyal client base by creating romantic gardens shaped by gentle interventions. She certainly can produce a slick contemporary design when the setting or the client demands it, but at heart you sense she is a country girl, and the majority of her work has a relaxed feel which is borderline dishevelled.

"You shouldn't look at one of my gardens and immediately know that I made it. It doesn't need to look like it has always been there, but it should look like it could be there forever. My process would be so much quicker if I had a house style, but I just can't do it.

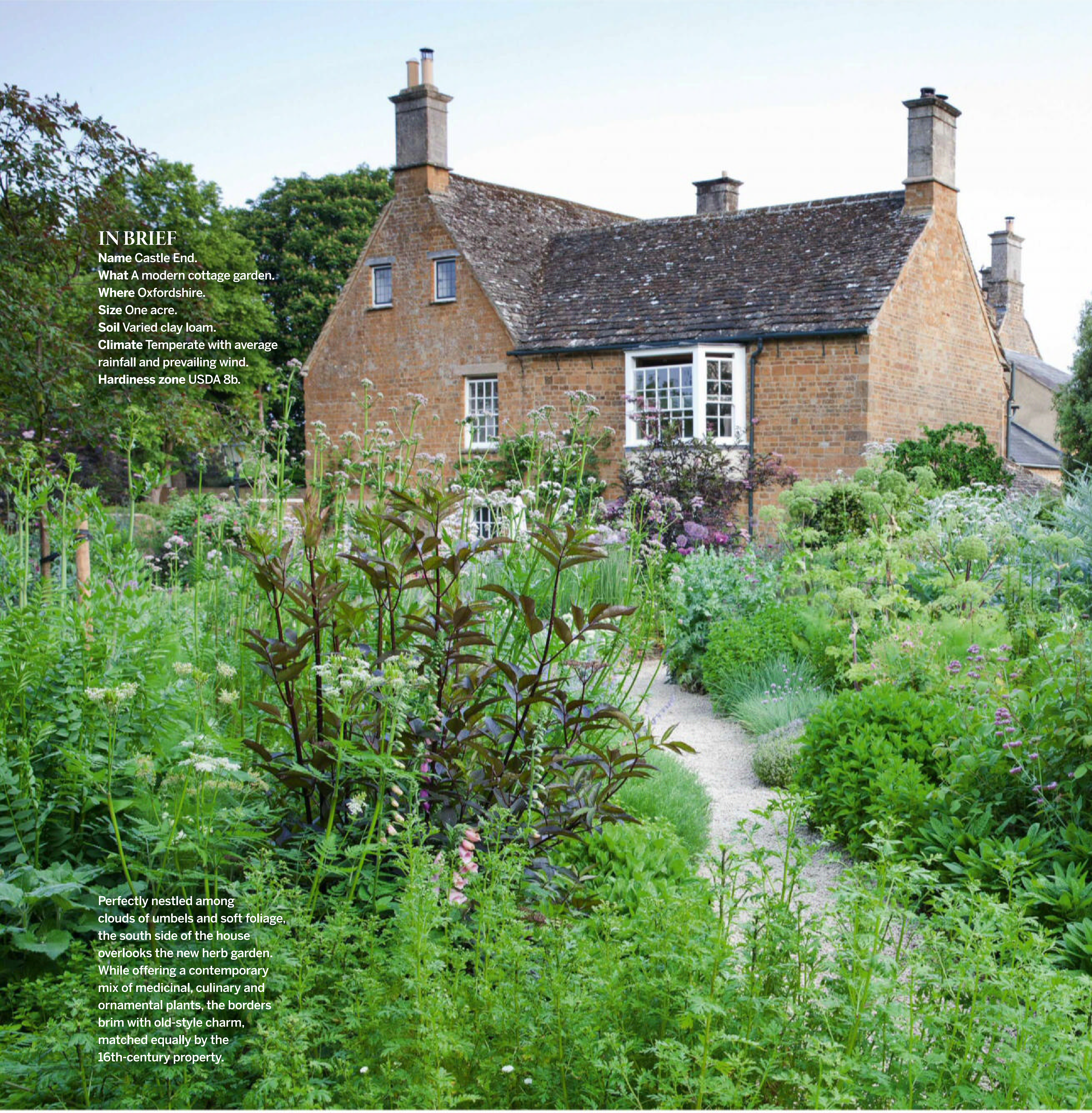
"When I meet a new client I often say I don't know what their garden will look like, but I do know what it will feel like. There will be harmonies of colour and harmonies of architecture, it will suit their way of life, but most of all it will be a warm and friendly place. Maybe that is a legacy of my childhood in Rome, where so much life was lived outside. A good garden is a place where you want to spend time."

Her work is particularly popular with people who work in creative industries themselves, but many of them insist on NDAs so it is her public work and award-winning show gardens that tend to get featured in the press. She adores the adrenalin rush of the Chelsea Flower Show (and has a shelf full of medals to prove that Chelsea loves her back) and these days is also an RHS judge and member of the RHS Show Gardens Selection Panel. Somehow she also finds time to support a raft of garden-related charities, has a loyal Instagram following who joined her for daily dog walks through the coronavirus lockdown, and launched a tailored bulb subscription service when she realised how many would-be clients couldn't afford a total redesign.

But she is always at her happiest with a pencil and sketch pad in her hands, dreaming up new designs. She won't confirm if she has ever worked for Simon Le Bon. "But I do believe that everyone deserves to have a lovely garden," says the eternal New Romantic. ■

USEFUL INFORMATION

Jo Thompson Landscape & Garden Design, 2201 Borough High Street, London SE1 1JA. Tel 020 7127 8438, jothompson-garden-design.co.uk



IN BRIEF

Name Castle End.
What A modern cottage garden.
Where Oxfordshire.
Size One acre.
Soil Varied clay loam.
Climate Temperate with average rainfall and prevailing wind.
Hardiness zone USDA 8b.

Perfectly nestled among clouds of umbels and soft foliage, the south side of the house overlooks the new herb garden. While offering a contemporary mix of medicinal, culinary and ornamental plants, the borders brim with old-style charm, matched equally by the 16th-century property.

Practically beautiful

In their Oxfordshire garden, Petra and Luke Hoyer Millar have combined relaxed, traditionally English planting with contemporary, practical touches

WORDS BENJAMIN WILLIAM POPE PHOTOGRAPHS REBECCA BERNSTEIN

1 ***Rosa*** **'Charles de Mills'** A rose that adds a quintessential English touch to the borders. A favourite of Petra's, its opulent flowers glow with bright magenta petals, filling parts of the garden with their timeless scent. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b†. **2** ***Thalictrum aquilegiifolium*** An erect herbaceous perennial with handsome, softly divided, glaucous foliage in spring, soon followed by clouds of purple-lilac to pale-pink flowers held on stiff stems. Prefers moist soil in sun or part shade. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

Bottom A soothing colour palette of blue, silver and white, softly tied together with varying shades of pink, is predominantly used throughout the garden. Holding court is a fine specimen of *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Gerda', its blackcurrant-stained flowers singing to the surrounding *Centranthus lecoqii* and *Phlomis tuberosa* 'Amazone'.

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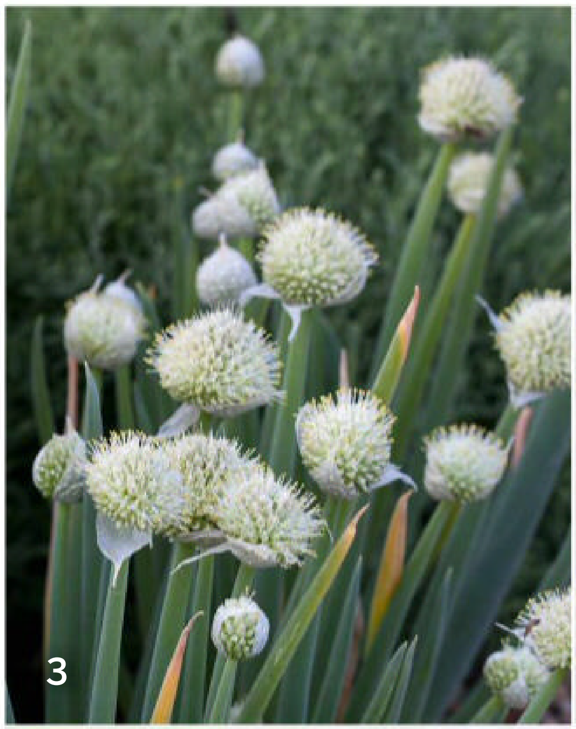
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.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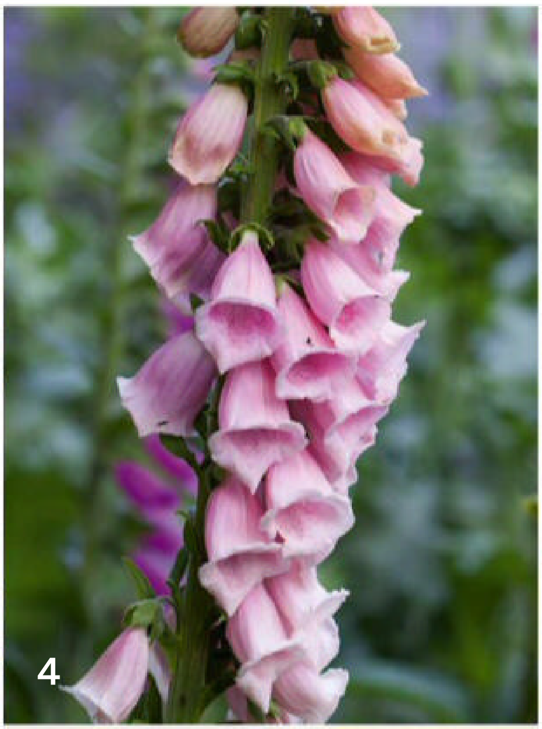
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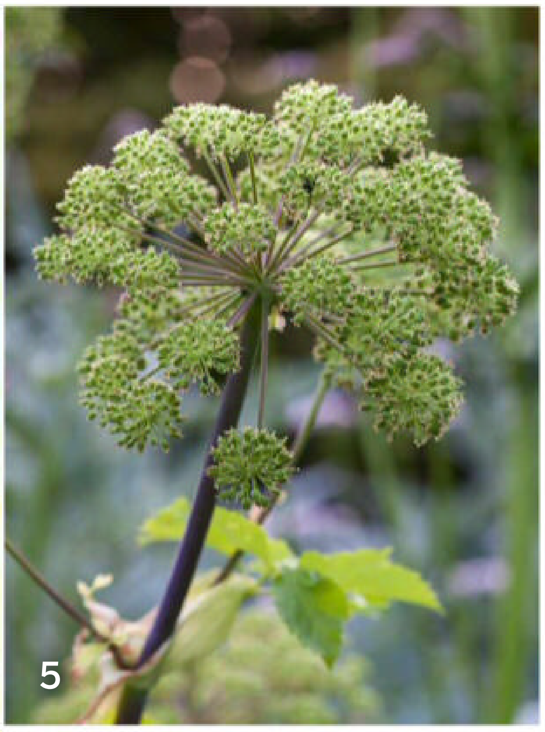
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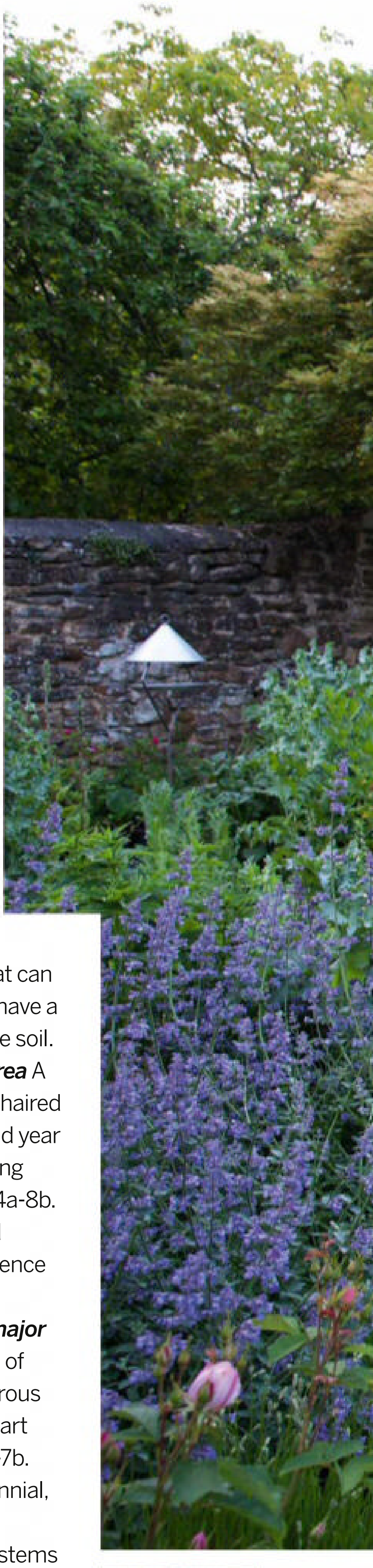

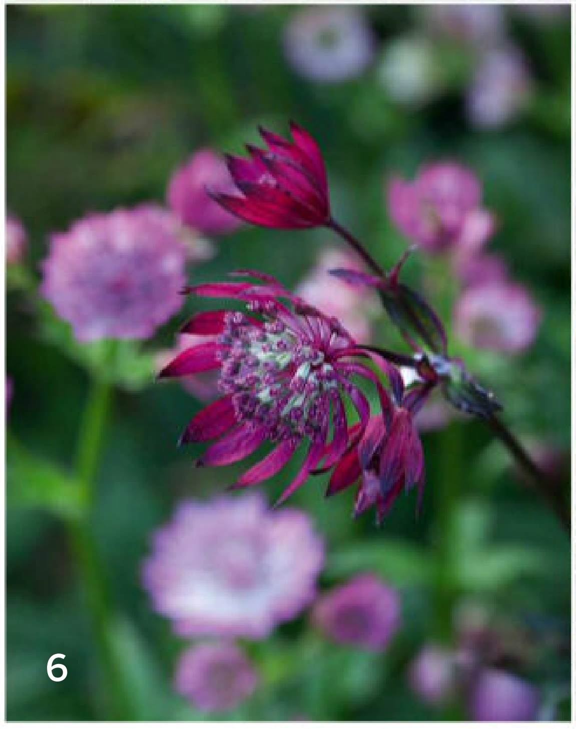
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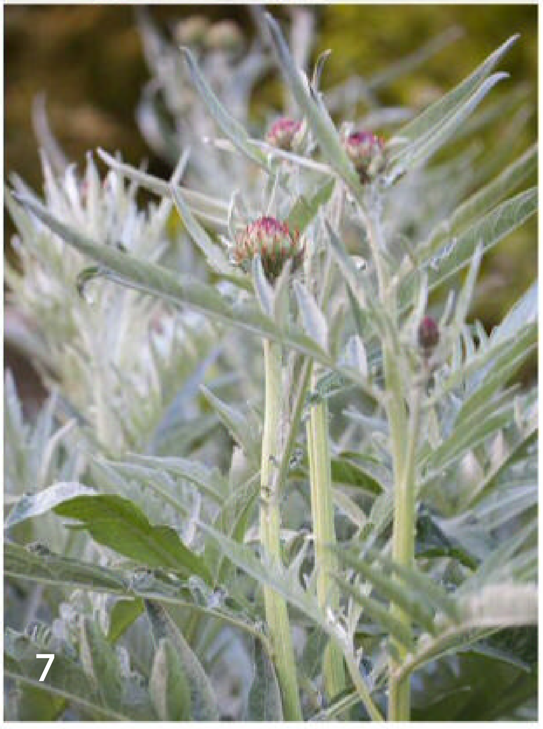
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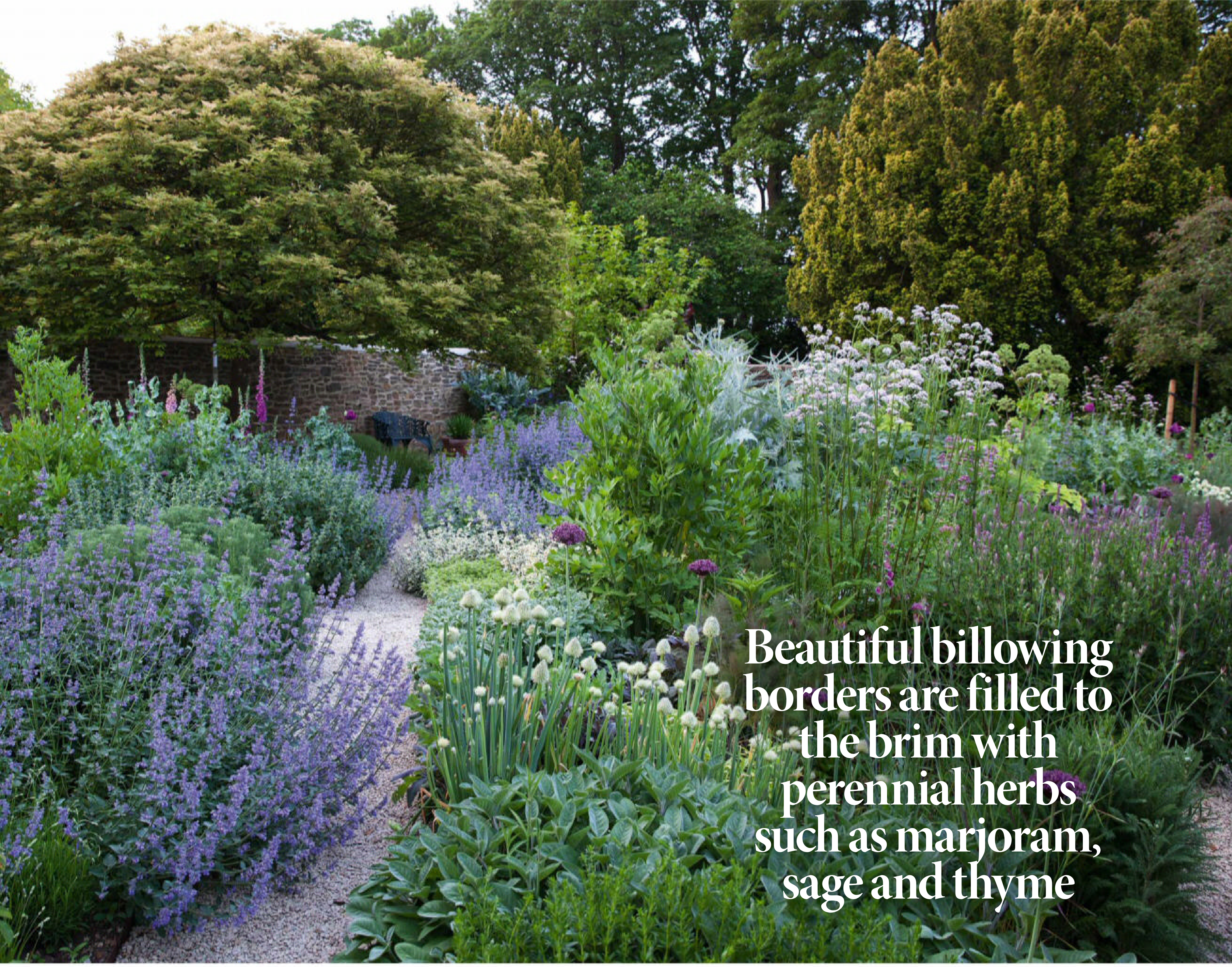
3 ***Allium fistulosum*** A useful perennial herb that can be used like chives, although its tubular leaves have a stronger taste. Prefers full sun in any reasonable soil. 70cm. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b. **4** ***Digitalis purpurea*** A promiscuous biennial forming a rosette of soft-haired green leaves. Flower spikes appear in the second year with masses of tubular hanging flowers in varying shades of pink and purple. 2m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b. **5** ***Angelica archangelica*** A majestic, short-lived perennial with fantastic globe-shaped inflorescence in midsummer. Prefers moist soil in sun or part shade. 2m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b. **6** ***Astrantia major*** **'Claret'** A reliable perennial with a dense clump of emerald palmate leaves, above which sit numerous tiny umbles of purplish red. Prefers full sun to part shade and moist soil. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b. **7** ***Cynara cardunculus*** An imposing, giant perennial, forming a magnificent clump of serrated silver leaves. Large, thistle-like flowers appear on tall stems in late summer. Prefers full sun in most free-draining soils. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

Right Here a riot of texture preludes the flowers. Angelica seedlings work to dramatic effect among the soft green of cut-leaved elder (*Sambucus nigra* f. *laciniata*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), golden marjoram and numerous thymes. Behind, the drama continues as the cardoon reaches for the sky, accompanied by seedlings of valerian.



Beautiful billowing borders are filled to the brim with perennial herbs such as marjoram, sage and thyme

Herb gardens are nothing new. They date back to the monastic gardens of the Middle Ages, where plants were collected and cultivated for culinary and medicinal use. To this day many reference the past, arranged in neat and tidy rows within ordered beds. Not so for the herb garden at Castle End. The current custodians, Petra and Luke Hoyer Millar, prefer a more relaxed approach. One that captures the essence of a traditional English cottage garden, while embracing contemporary planting that is both naturalistic and environmentally aware.

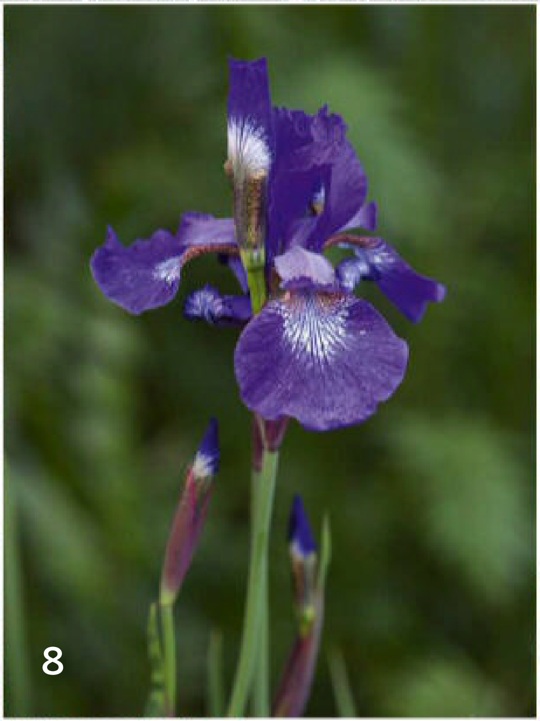
The result is a collection of beautiful billowing borders, filled to the brim with perennial herbs such as marjoram, sage and thyme. These are informally mixed with ornamentals, including eryngiums and bearded irises, punctuated with the texture and form of stately cardoons, enthusiastic lovage and flowering onions. Taller species, such as *Valeriana officinalis* and *Thalictrum* 'Elin' add broken height to the mix, complementing the permanent structure that is created from the interesting cultivars of elder and old rose. As in the rest of the garden, the self-seeding of plants such as angelicas, foxgloves and sweet cicely is encouraged. Yet a judicious hand in weeding is required to maintain a healthy balance. It truly is a joy to behold the tapestry of flowers and foliage, emitting aromatic scent and oils gently quivering with the attention of foraging bees and insects.

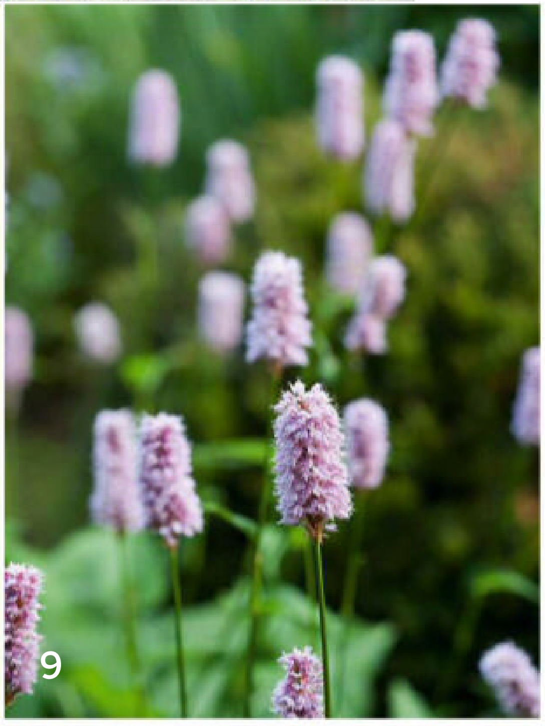
But it is not all about the beauty. A practical attitude, helped by having a husband qualified in architecture, guided Petra's design of the herb garden. "We wanted to have as much growing space as possible, hence the large borders," she says, "but realised we needed paths for general access and cultivation." The solution is a series of tessellated triangular borders, framed with straight narrow paths. Where many would avoid planting to a tapering point, Petra believes that "it's great for focussing the mind". The irregular angled beds also help to make use of all the available space in a garden where right angles seldom exist. Before planting, the design was reinforced with the installation of heavy-grade steel edging, denoting border from path. A laborious task that the couple completed themselves, in the knowledge that any ongoing maintenance and lasting aesthetic ▷

To continue turn to page 90

Above A bench rests in front of a dry-stone wall, under the canopy of *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Brilliantissimum', providing the perfect spot to take in the garden. Mounds of *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' mingle with artemesias, lavender and sage, alongside lower-growing winter savoury.

Irregular angled beds help make use of all the available space, in a garden where right angles seldom exist



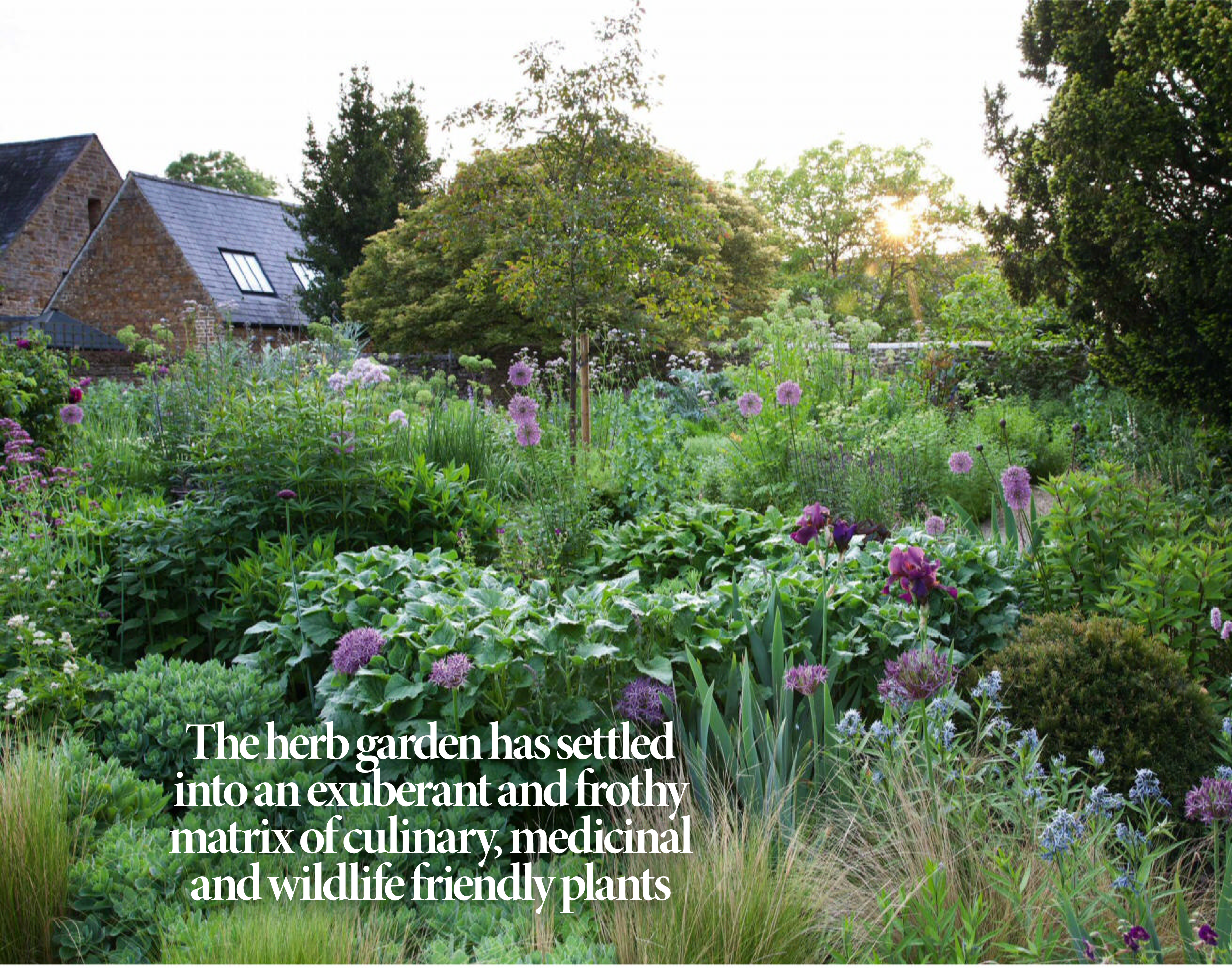


Far left The deep borders softly undulate offering selected views across the garden. *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' and *Stipa tenuissima* provide movement and texture to complement the herbaceous perennials, while the generous stone edging sets off the planting and provides a smart edge to the lawn.

8 *Iris sibirica* A rhizomatous perennial with elegant flowers of purplish-blue, detailed with white veining and bronze colouring towards the centre and grass-like leaves. 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

9 *Persicaria bistorta* 'Superba' A vigorous, clump-forming perennial with large, deeply veined leaves forming a handsome clump. From midsummer, dense pink spikes rise above the foliage on vertical stems. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

Below *Allium atropurpureum* architecturally adds seasonal rhythm to the borders that frame either side of the main lawn, its dark tones working well with the pinks and mauves of *Astrantia* 'Roma' and *Geranium phaeum* 'Raven'.



The herb garden has settled into an exuberant and frothy matrix of culinary, medicinal and wildlife friendly plants

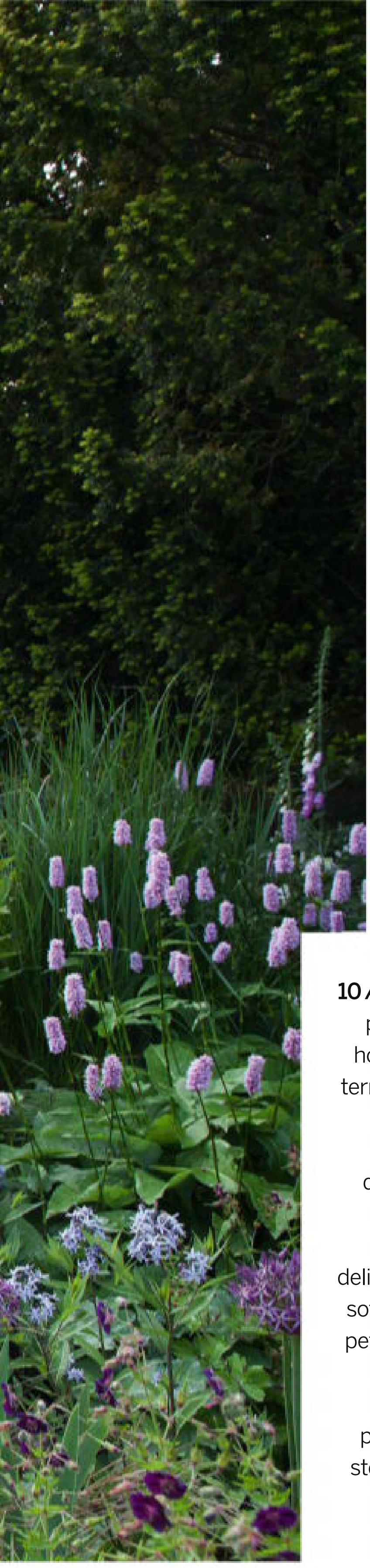
Above Looking east over the herb garden, the flowering onions *Allium stipitatum* 'Mars' and *Allium schubertii* dance among the various perennials and annuals in the borders, all regularly visited by bees and other pollinators.

▷ would yield the rewards. Two years on and the herb garden has settled into an exuberant and frothy matrix of culinary, medicinal and wildlife-friendly plants, all held together and shown to best effect by its strong uncompromising framework.

A stroke of genius perhaps, but not one of luck. The herb garden is a culmination of learning, experience and observation that began many years ago, when Petra decided to retrain in horticulture at Miss Havergal's renowned Waterperry Gardens. While acquiring several RHS qualifications, Waterperry invaluably granted Petra "close inspection and contact with so many plants that were actually growing in a garden setting". Several stints at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, planting on show gardens for Jo Thompson, galvanised Petra's knowledge allowing a better understanding of plant placement and design. Though of course, to paraphrase Gertrude Jekyll, the garden itself is a great teacher and a classroom that both Luke and Petra know very well.

Since Petra and Luke moved to this house five years ago, garden projects have extended into years of development. With the help of long-standing gardener Kevin, the overgrown shrubs entangled with roaming *Clematis montana* are now gone. In their place sit a terrace, formal lawn, deep borders and now the new herb garden. Softening the edges of the property are the early stages of an orchard and woodland garden, both gently reaching out to the surrounding pockets of deciduous trees and meadow grassland, that form the English Heritage site of Deddington Castle. "We get a lot of wildlife in the garden, including many insects and birds, which have some influence on the plants we choose and how we garden," says Petra. A tidy and trim after the first flowers during midsummer ensures the display goes on later into the year, while a cut back and weed in spring helps to keep things in order.

Despite planting additional trees and shrubs, the raised aspect of the garden makes it exposed to the wind and so staking and plant support is always high on the agenda. For this, Petra uses a mix of natural woven pea sticks and permanent rusted metal supports that can be installed quickly, "there is so much to do, we just don't have the time to stake everything". Although looking around the garden you wouldn't know. Planting, layout and design appear to be in delicate balance. While providing nourishment for all the senses the garden illustrates perfectly Petra's belief that "practical can be beautiful". ■



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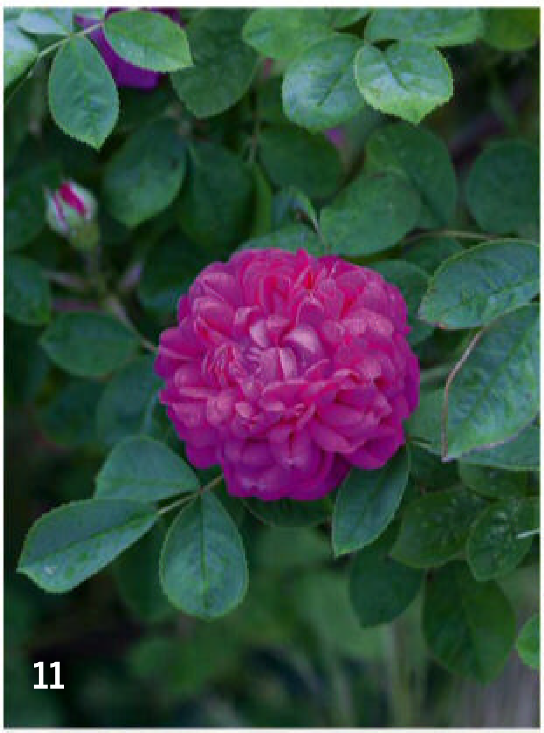

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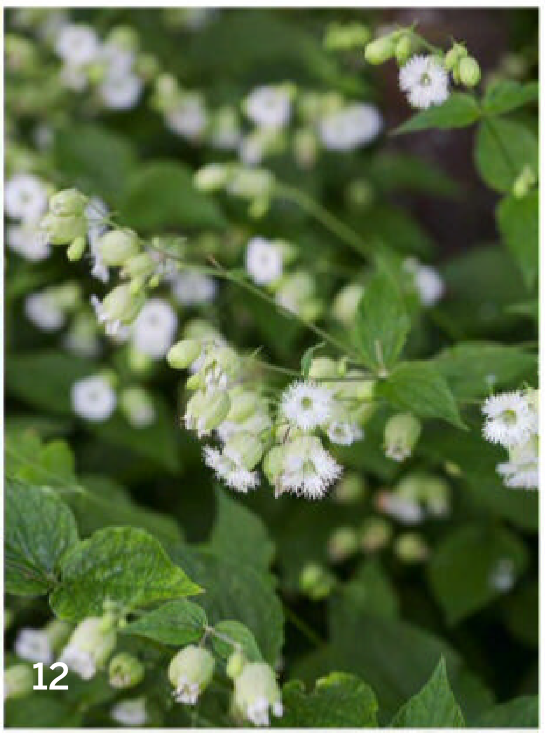

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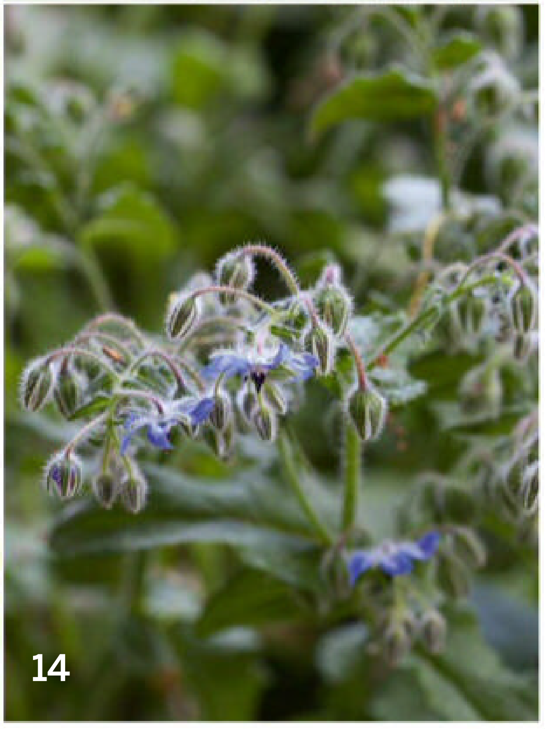

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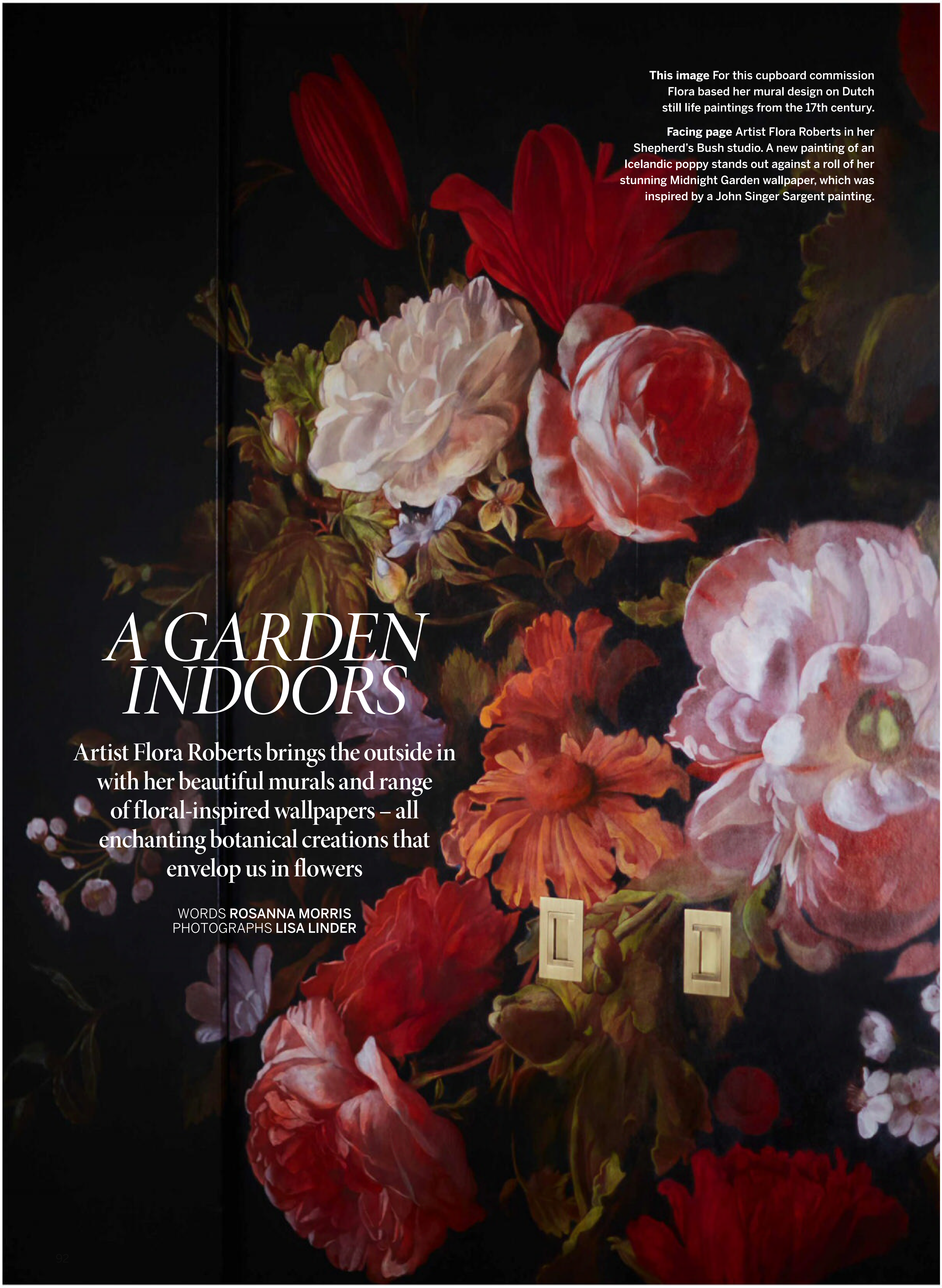
10 *Amsonia tabernaemontana* A tidy, clump-forming perennial with singular stems rising from the base, holding small, lance-shaped leaves and topped with terminal clusters of steel-blue, star-shaped flowers in summer. 80cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b. **11 *Rosa* 'De Resht'** A compact and well-behaved rose with dark-green foliage and fully double flowers that are highly fragrant and bright magenta in colour. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b. **12 *Silene fimbriata*** A delicate perennial flowering throughout summer over soft mounds of emerald-green foliage. White-fringed petals crown an inflated green calyx, giving this plant its distinctive flower. 30cm. RHS H6. **13 *Valeriana officinalis*** An upright perennial with aromatic pinnate leaves in spring, soon giving way to slender stems that are crowned with clusters of tiny flowers, ranging from soft pink to white in colour. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 4a-7b. **14 *Borago officinalis*** A vigorous annual that forms a generous clump of large, hirsute leaves, topped with starry blue flowers throughout summer. 40cm. RHS H5, USDA 2a-11.

Left Rusted metal supports sit comfortably in the borders, giving structure and assisting plants such as this *Rosa* 'De Resht'. All supports and staking get positioned in early spring before growth, so as the season progresses the plants grow through the supports, achieving a soft natural look.

A GARDEN INDOORS

Artist Flora Roberts brings the outside in with her beautiful murals and range of floral-inspired wallpapers – all enchanting botanical creations that envelop us in flowers

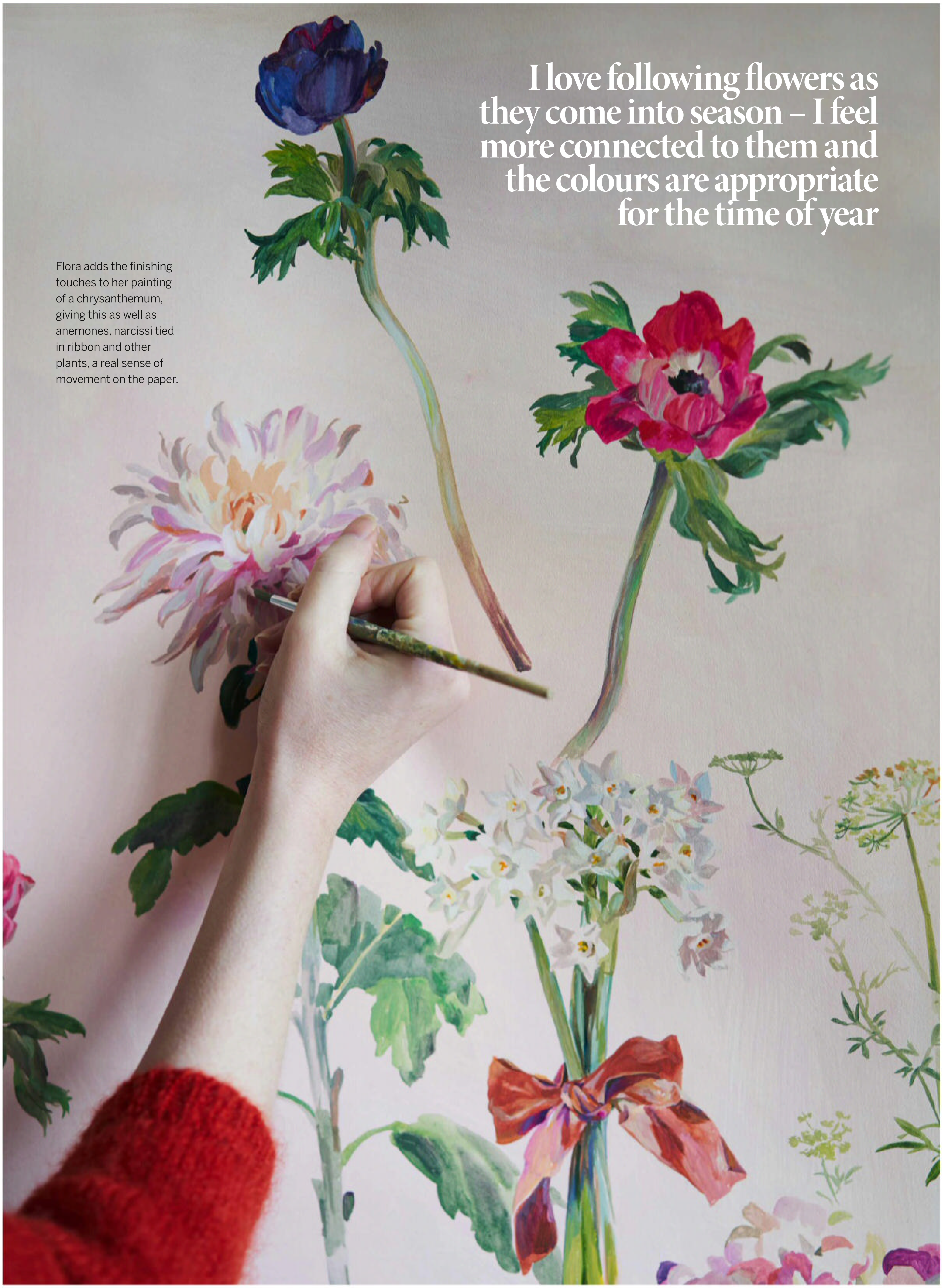
WORDS **ROSANNA MORRIS**
PHOTOGRAPHS **LISA LINDER**



This image For this cupboard commission Flora based her mural design on Dutch still life paintings from the 17th century.

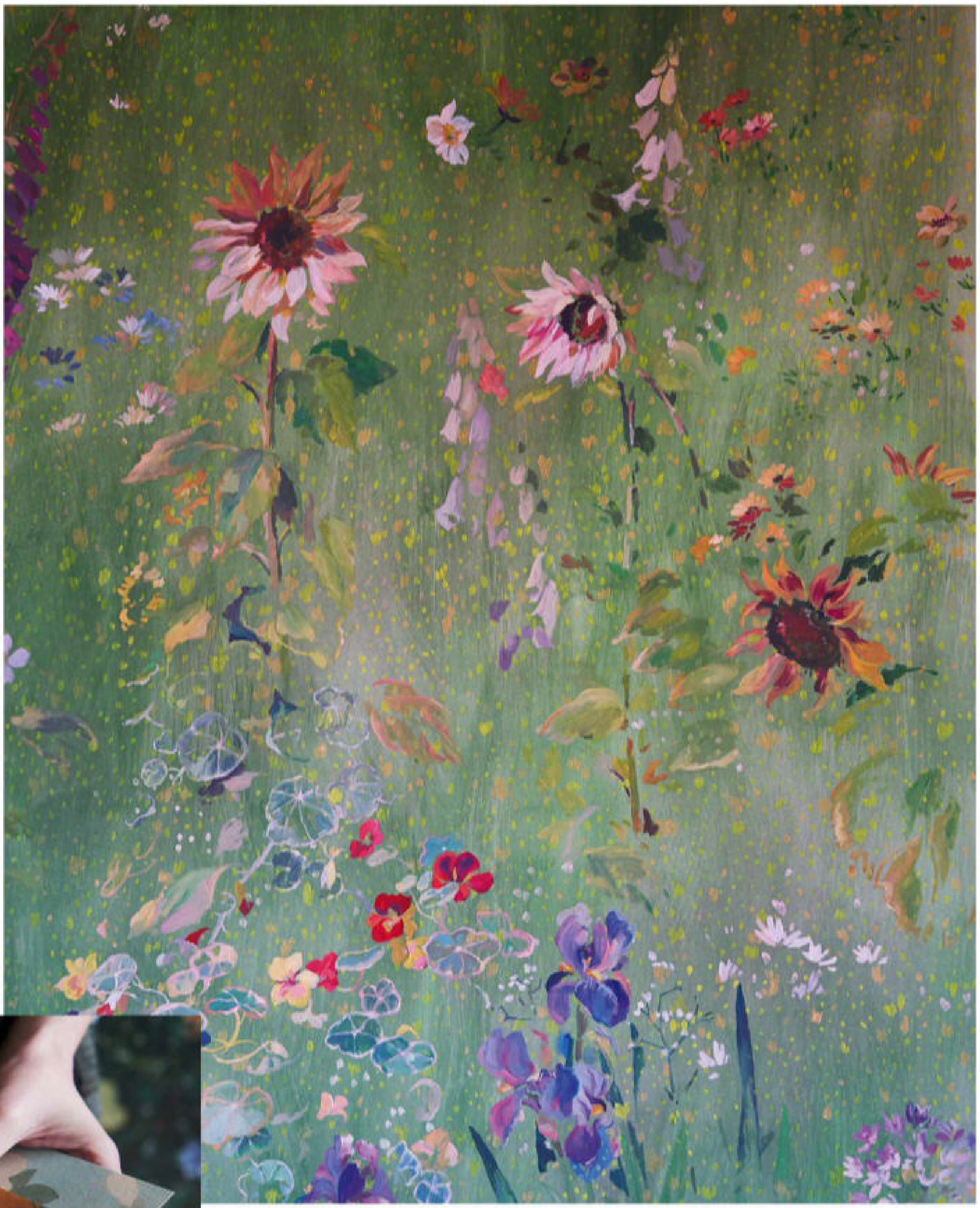
Facing page Artist Flora Roberts in her Shepherd's Bush studio. A new painting of an Icelandic poppy stands out against a roll of her stunning Midnight Garden wallpaper, which was inspired by a John Singer Sargent painting.

What is so cool about the Dutch still lifes is that they painted tulips with a dark background, which makes the flowers look like light bulbs



I love following flowers as they come into season – I feel more connected to them and the colours are appropriate for the time of year

Flora adds the finishing touches to her painting of a chrysanthemum, giving this as well as anemones, narcissi tied in ribbon and other plants, a real sense of movement on the paper.



Above left For her new collection of wallpaper designs Flora is experimenting with different textured plants, including some dried grasses and seedheads sent to her by flower grower and designer Milli Proust, alongside cottage garden flowers and these delicately tinted straw flowers *Xerochrysum bracteatum* 'Salmon Rose'.

Above Work in progress on a new wallpaper design that offers the freshness of a summer garden.

Left Samples of Flora's current collection of wallpapers.

Decorative painter and designer Flora Roberts longs for foxgloves but is in the throes of painting tulips. "I do like foxgloves, they are so cute and have all those dots," she says. "Roses are a challenge. Dahlias are satisfying."

Flora paints flowers from life every day from spring to the end of summer and can be impatient for flowers to grow. When they do emerge, she finds herself in a flurry of paint and petals to catch them before they wither and fade. "I worry that the flowers are dying and I have to paint them," she says, surrounded in her studio by colourful ribbons and cuttings of bluebells, forget-me-nots, cow parsley, apple blossom, peonies, iris, aquilegia, buttercups, violas and clematis. "I love following the flowers as they come into season – I feel more connected to them and I find the colours and textures I'm using are appropriate for the time of year."

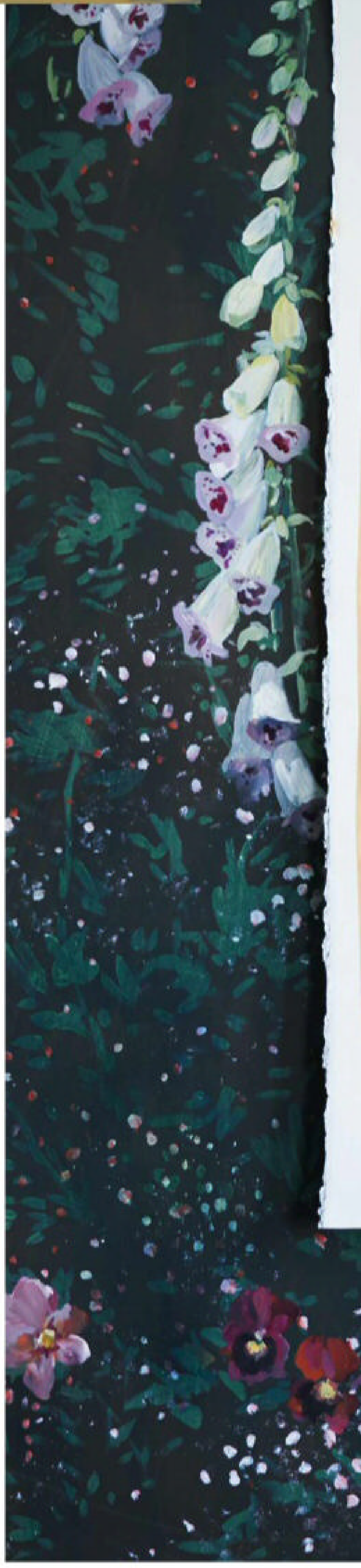
Her simple yet beautiful acrylic and watercolour paintings are usually the germinations of great, elaborate wallcoverings – either privately commissioned murals or, more recently, wallpaper. Flora launched her first collection of wallpaper last autumn and will add four new designs every September when plants begin to retreat once more.

Colour, essence and light are wonderfully captured in Flora's work as she is fascinated by atmosphere and inspired by historic textiles and paintings. Her botanical wallpapers bring the garden indoors and make one feel they are among the flowers. This is most felt in her hypnotic Midnight Garden wallpaper, which is an interpretation of the painting *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* by John Singer Sargent of two small girls holding Chinese lanterns in a garden at dusk. "I did ▷

Above The pretty pink daisy-like flowers, *Rhodanthe chlorocephala* subsp. *rosea*, are new subjects for Flora's artworks.

Top right Flora unrolls different colourways of her Camellia wallpaper, which depicts buds in flower on twisting tree branches. It's a peaceful design that conjures up the romance of her favourite English gardens.

Right To create different textures, Flora paints in both acrylics and watercolours.



▷ a design based on the colours and feeling of the painting," she says. "The colours are similar, but I changed the lilies to foxgloves. The flowers glow and twinkle in the evening light."

This spring and summer Flora is experimenting with new wallpaper designs. "I'm thinking possibly hollyhocks. Their status has changed recently. They're now cool," muses Flora. "Hollyhocks remind me of the 1920s. They're nostalgic. I would like to incorporate sunflowers into a design too. There are so many varieties of sunflower. Nasturtiums also, and maybe roses. Possibly magnolias."

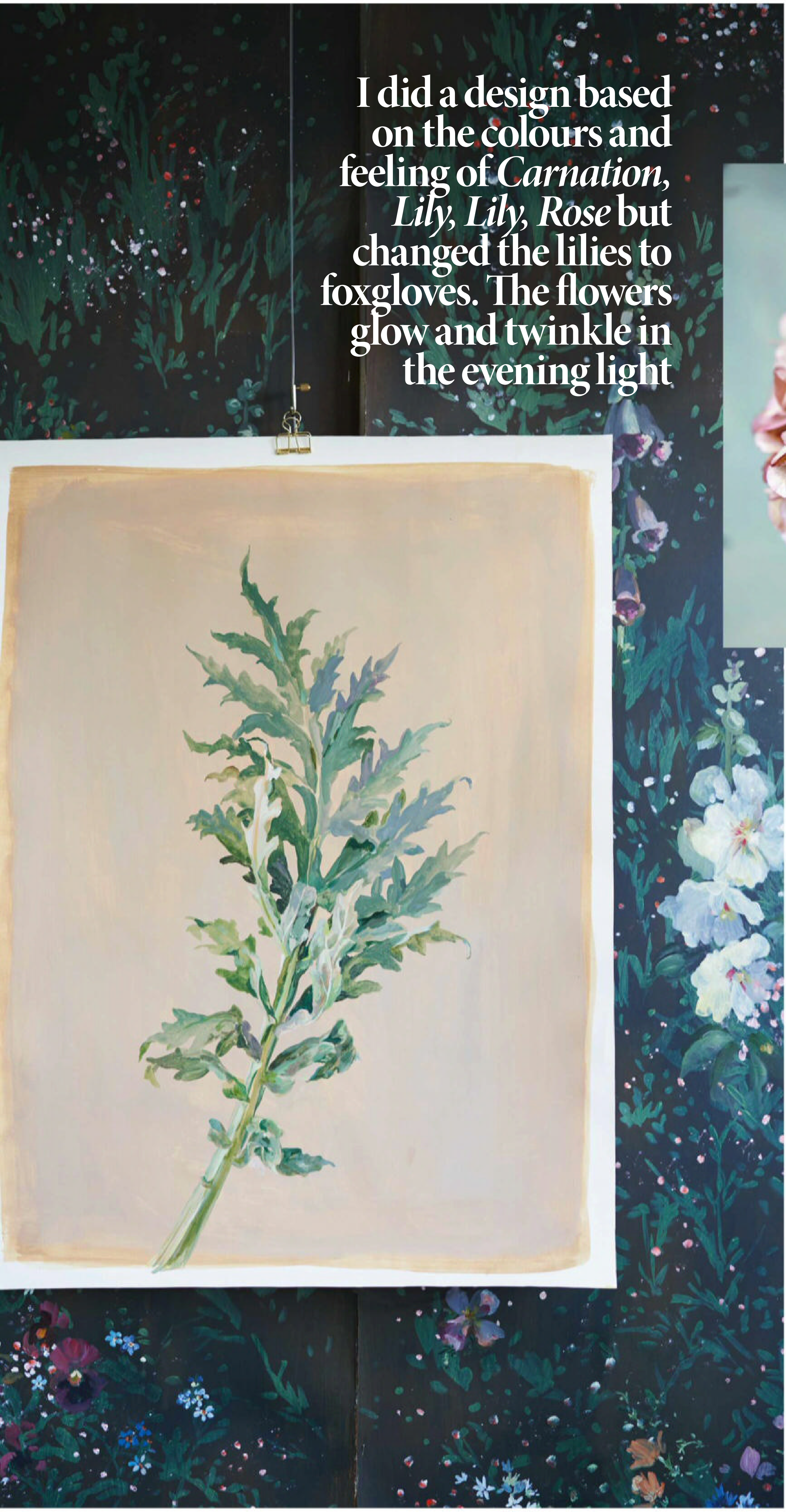
Flora grew up on the Scottish borders and studied printed textiles at Glasgow School of Art before going on to do an MA in mixed media textiles at the Royal College of Art in London. She began her career working on textile designs for the fashion industry but after restoring murals at her sister's house, commissions came in for private houses and other commercial projects. She has also designed fabric and wallpaper for companies such as Lewis & Wood.

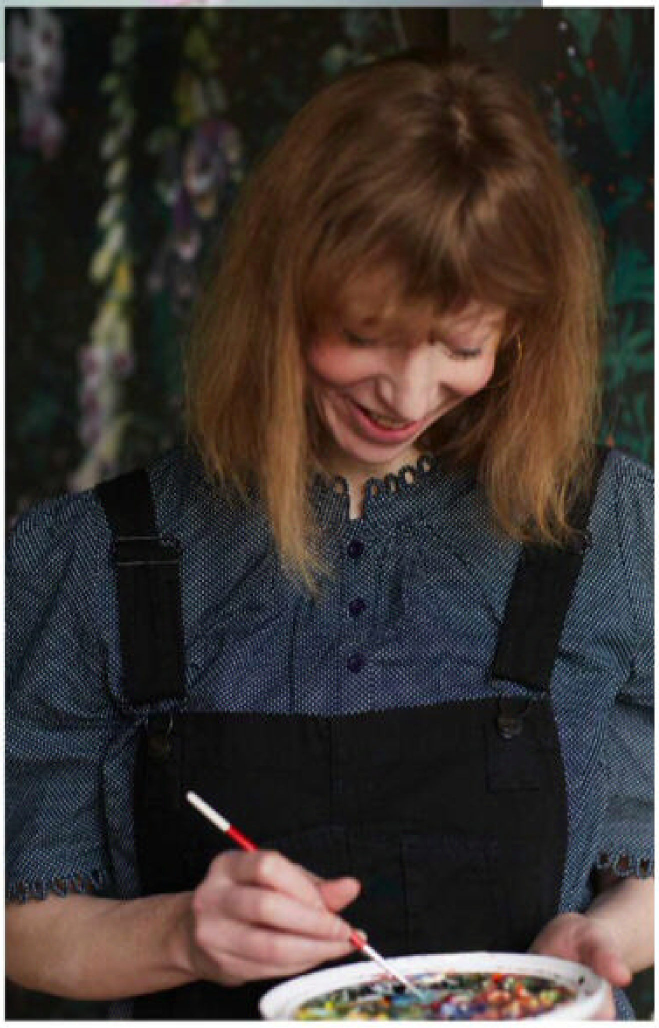
For one mural commission, Flora painted a cupboard with a design inspired by Dutch old master tulip paintings. "What is so cool about the Dutch still lifes is that they painted tulips with a dark background, which makes the flowers look like light bulbs," she says. Indeed, backgrounds are as important to Flora as the plants in focus and the colours will change according to whether she is in the city or the country. When she was a teenager, Flora's family moved to Dorset and she returns often to take inspiration – and specimens – from her parents' garden. "My mother has the perfect parrot tulips," she says. "She has lovely black tulips too, which are really fun to paint. Lots of oily blues. They are like the surface of a starling." Flora will no doubt capture those iridescent ruffles in her inimitable style before they too depart for another year. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Flora's work at **floraroberts.co.uk**. You can also find a full range of Flora's wallpapers at hamiltonweston.com

> I did a design based on the colours and feeling of *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* but changed the lilies to foxgloves. The flowers glow and twinkle in the evening light





Left Flora tries a new design of a globe artichoke leaf against her Midnight Blue wallpaper. Colour and atmosphere are key to Flora's work. The backgrounds are as important as the plants in focus and the colours she uses change according to whether she is in the city or the country – from bright shades of Jamaican-influenced houses in Notting Hill, to the natural tones of wildflowers and woodland.

Top All of Flora's designs come from her careful observation of plants, such as these dried hydrangea flowers.

Above Flora mixes acrylics in her studio.

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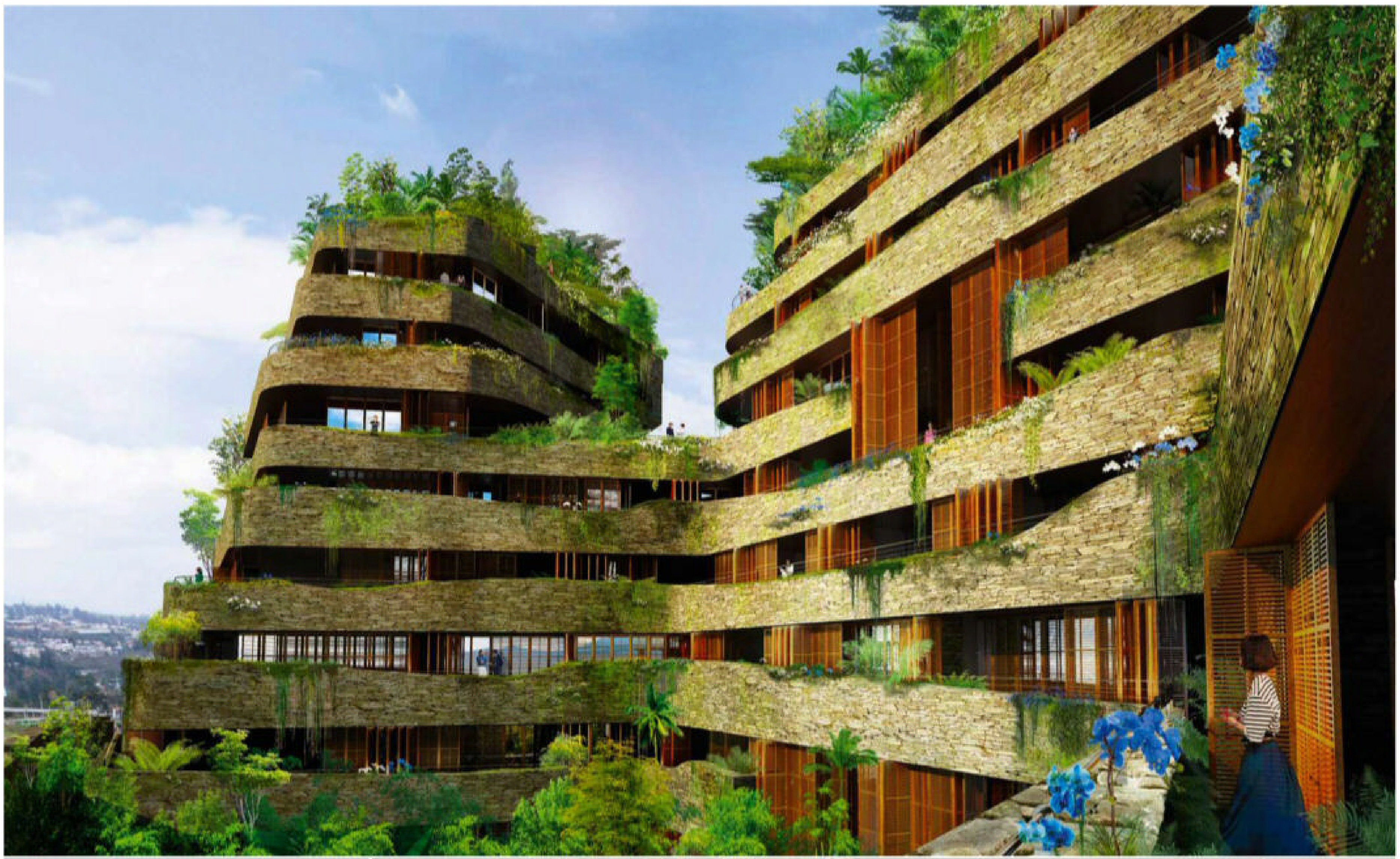


MOUNTAIN HIGH

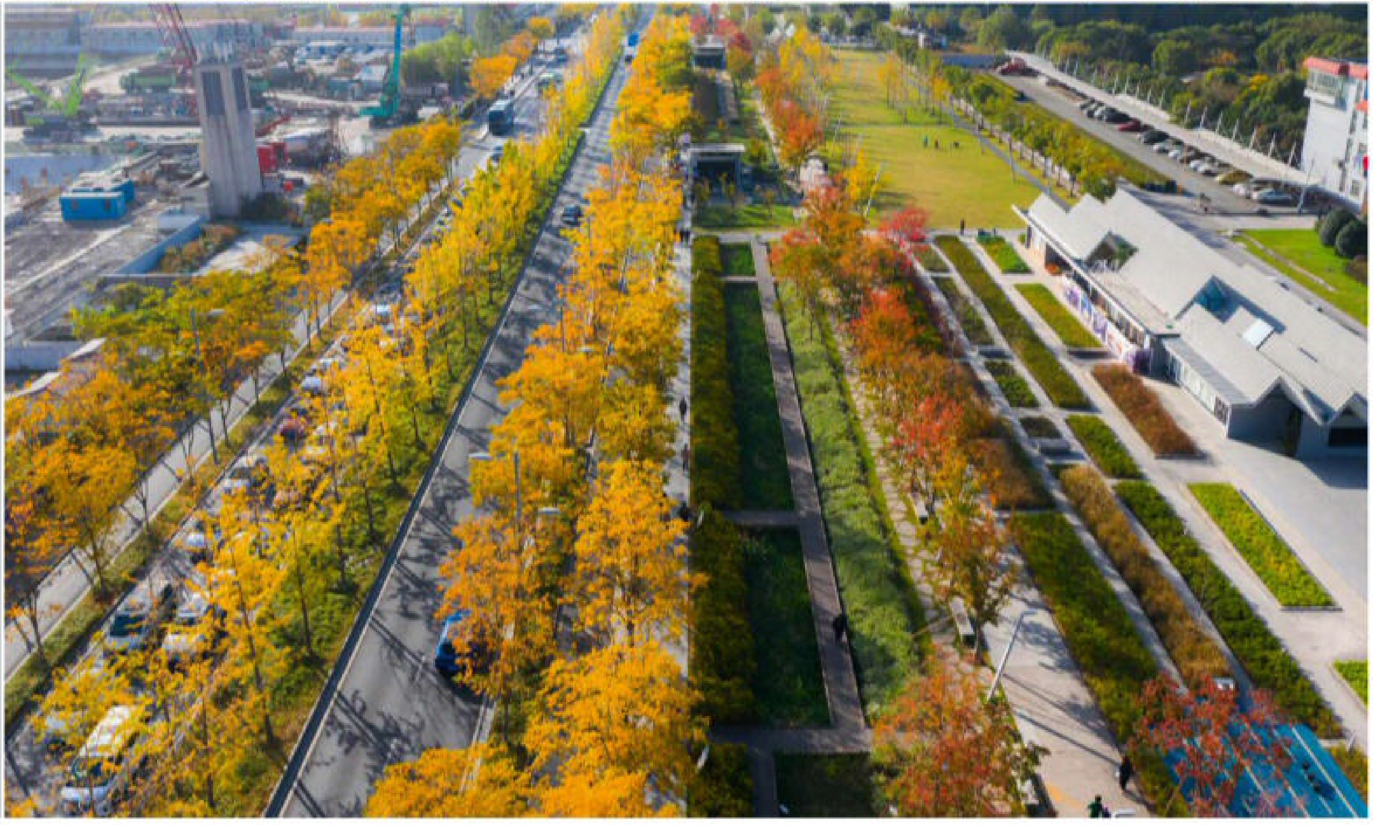
Construction has started on a development of nine high-rise apartment towers studded with vertical gardens in the Cumbayá neighbourhood in Quito, Ecuador, designed by French studio Ateliers Jean Nouvel. The towers in the Aquarela complex, each between seven and ten storeys high, are designed to mirror the nearby steep mountains, while the greenery-filled courtyard that links the buildings suggests a mountain pass. The stone-clad balcony and rooftop gardens, planted with native species, will be watered with collected rainwater, and wastewater from the buildings will be filtered and recycled. Three towers have already been completed, with the remainder due to be finished by 2023.
jeannouvel.com/en

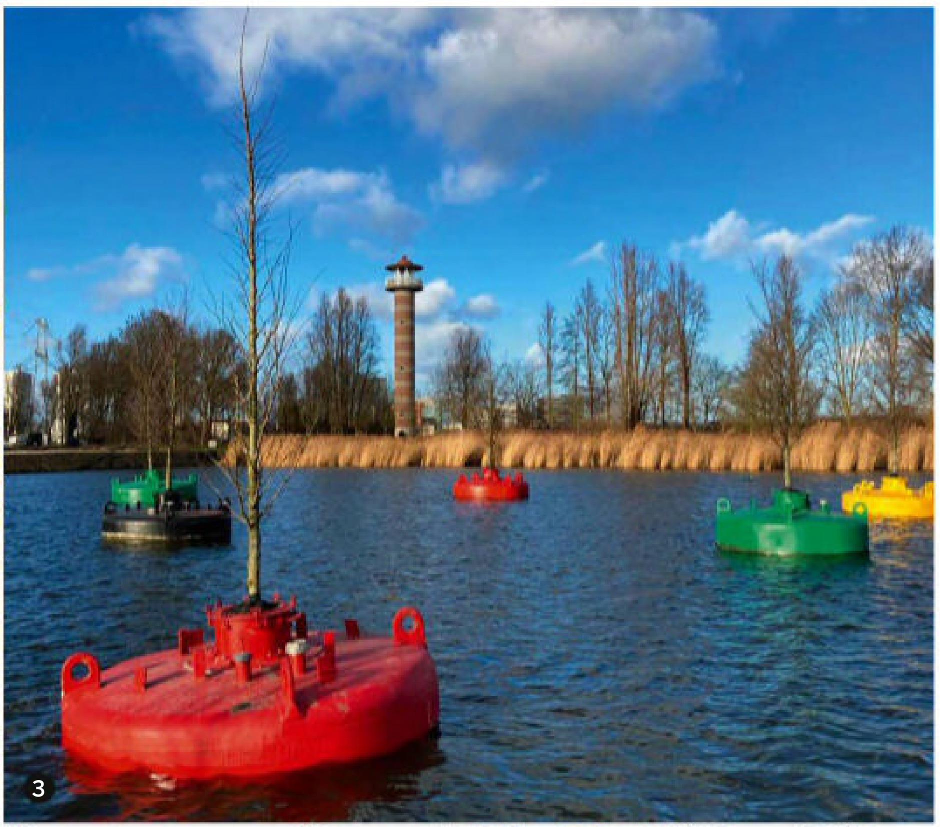
News

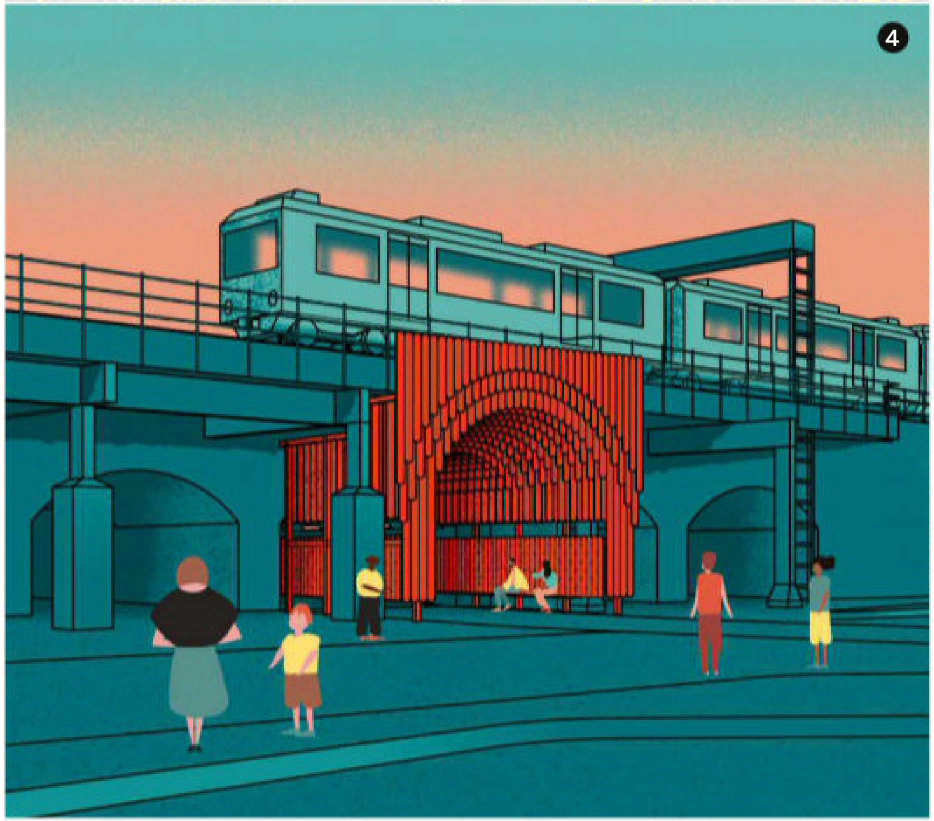
COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

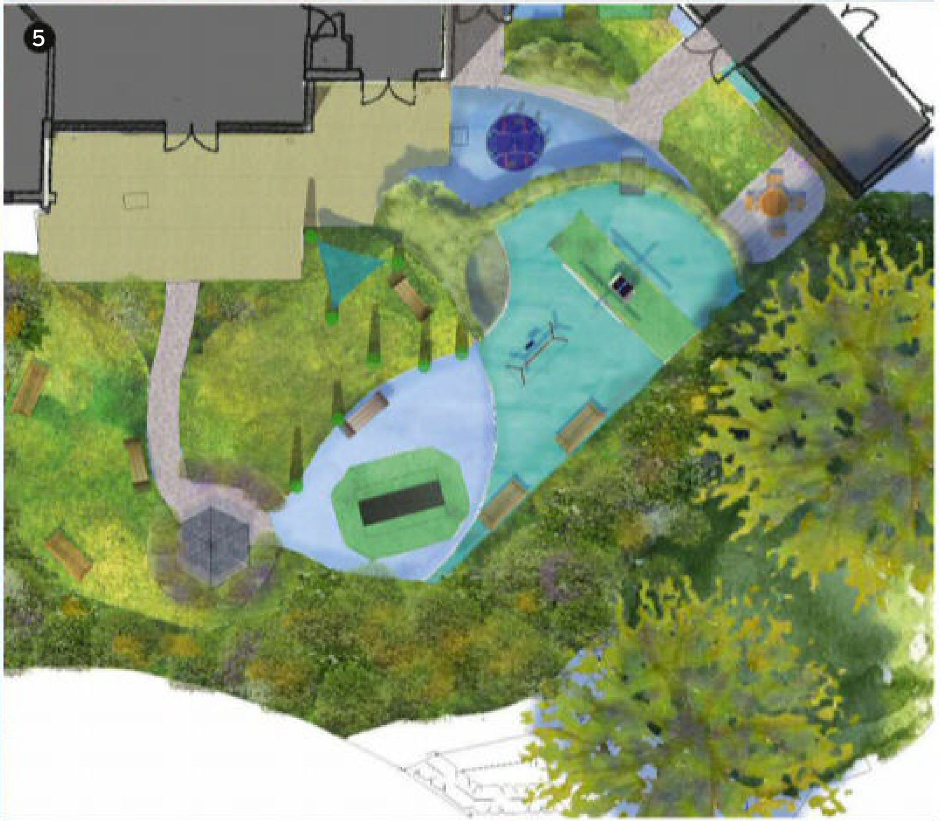
① AERODYNAMICS AT WORK

Design studio Sasaki has created a linear park, almost 2km long, on the site of a former runway at Longhua Airport in the Xuhui riverfront area of Shanghai, China. Rows of deciduous trees define linear spaces for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. The main pathway incorporates concrete from the original runway to reflect the site's history. The park, which is divided into a series of small gardens and areas of planting, was designed to collect run-off rainwater from the surrounding area with a rain garden at the north end and a collection basin, under wetland, to the south. **sasaki.com**









② SURROUNDED BY MAGIC

Installation of the winning gardens at the 22nd International Garden Festival at Jardins de Métis, Quebec, Canada, has begun. The five winning entries on the theme Magic Lies Outside, include Porte Bonheur, a French collaboration by David Bonnard, Laura Giuliani and Amélie Viale, which invites visitors to explore their surroundings, and Open Space by Legaga, a Canadian team of architecture interns, which opens out the walls of a typical house and floats it above a network of flowerbeds, inviting us to let our imaginations run wild. The festival is due to open on 26 June. **jardinsdemetis.com**

③ BOBBING ALONG

An art installation of a 'forest' of 20 elm trees (*Ulmus* 'Dodoens') bobbing around on repurposed maritime buoys in Rotterdam's Rijn Harbour has been relocated to lake Weerwater in Almere where it will form part of Floriade Expo 2022. Bobbing Forest was created by Jeroen Everaert, founder of art producer Mothership, and references issues such as climate change and the importance of greenery in the city, which complements the 'Growing Green Cities' theme of Floriade. Visitors will be able to view the installation from a cable car or boat, or from the terrace on the Weerwater. **floriade.com**

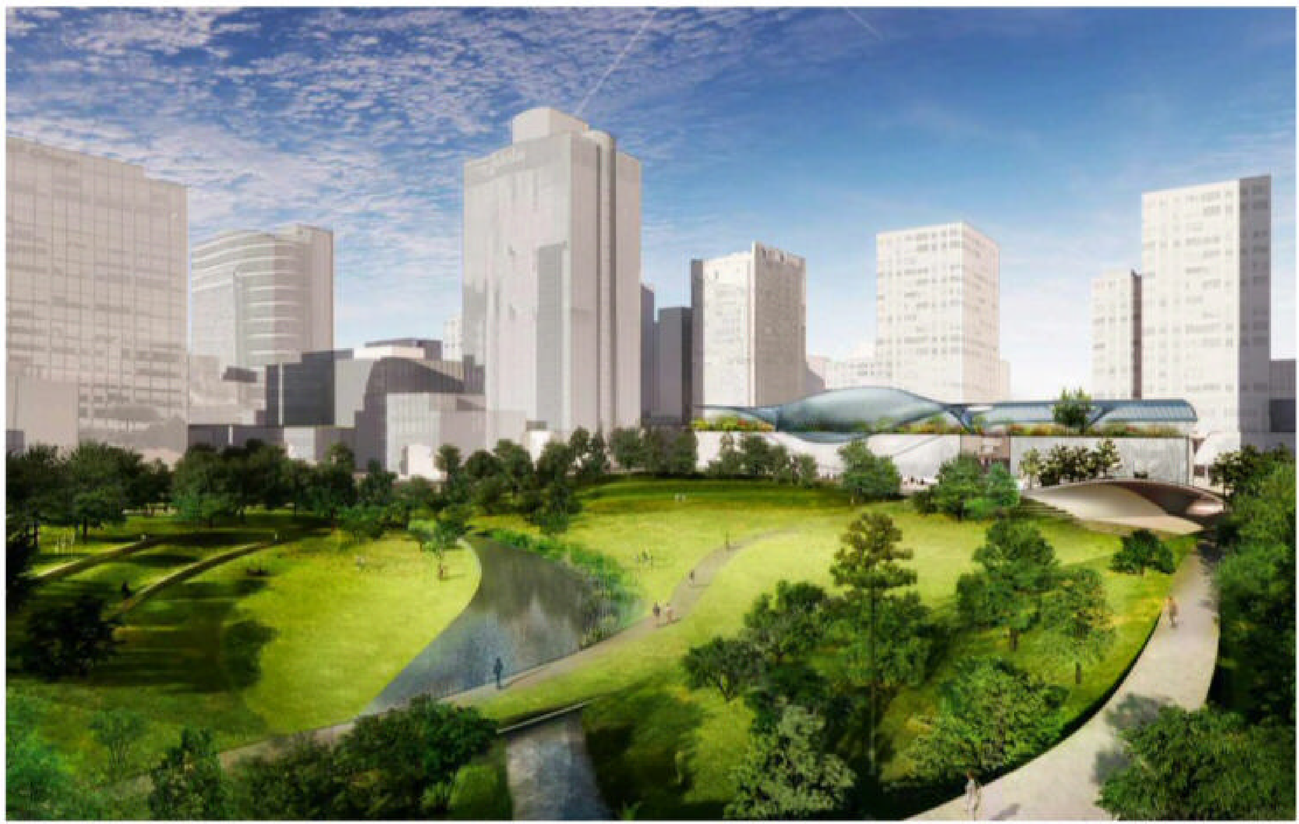
④ UNDERNEATH THE ARCHES

Arch 42 Gateways, a competition organised by the London Festival of Architecture with Wandsworth Council to transform an historic railway arch into a welcoming public route, has been won by emerging architecture practice Projects Office. The winning scheme, which will link communities in Wandsworth's Nine Elms, will see the architects working with local people to reimagine railway station dagger boards. Proposals include a dramatic funnel archway at the southern entrance, a decorative arch to the north, plentiful planting and a totem that glows at night. **londonfestivalofarchitecture.org**

⑤ ACCESSIBLE PLAY

A new garden has been installed by Greenfingers charity at St Oswald's Hospice for children and young adults in Newcastle. Designed by in-house garden project manager Holly Harrington, the extended garden is built around a wheelchair-accessible swing, a roundabout and a trampoline, and features willow structures, including a tunnel, and tree posts shaped from trunks of ash. Areas of new planting with flowering shrubs, perennials and grasses soften the space and introduce colour, texture and scent. Shade-tolerant planting has been added alongside existing trees. **greenfingerscharity.org.uk**

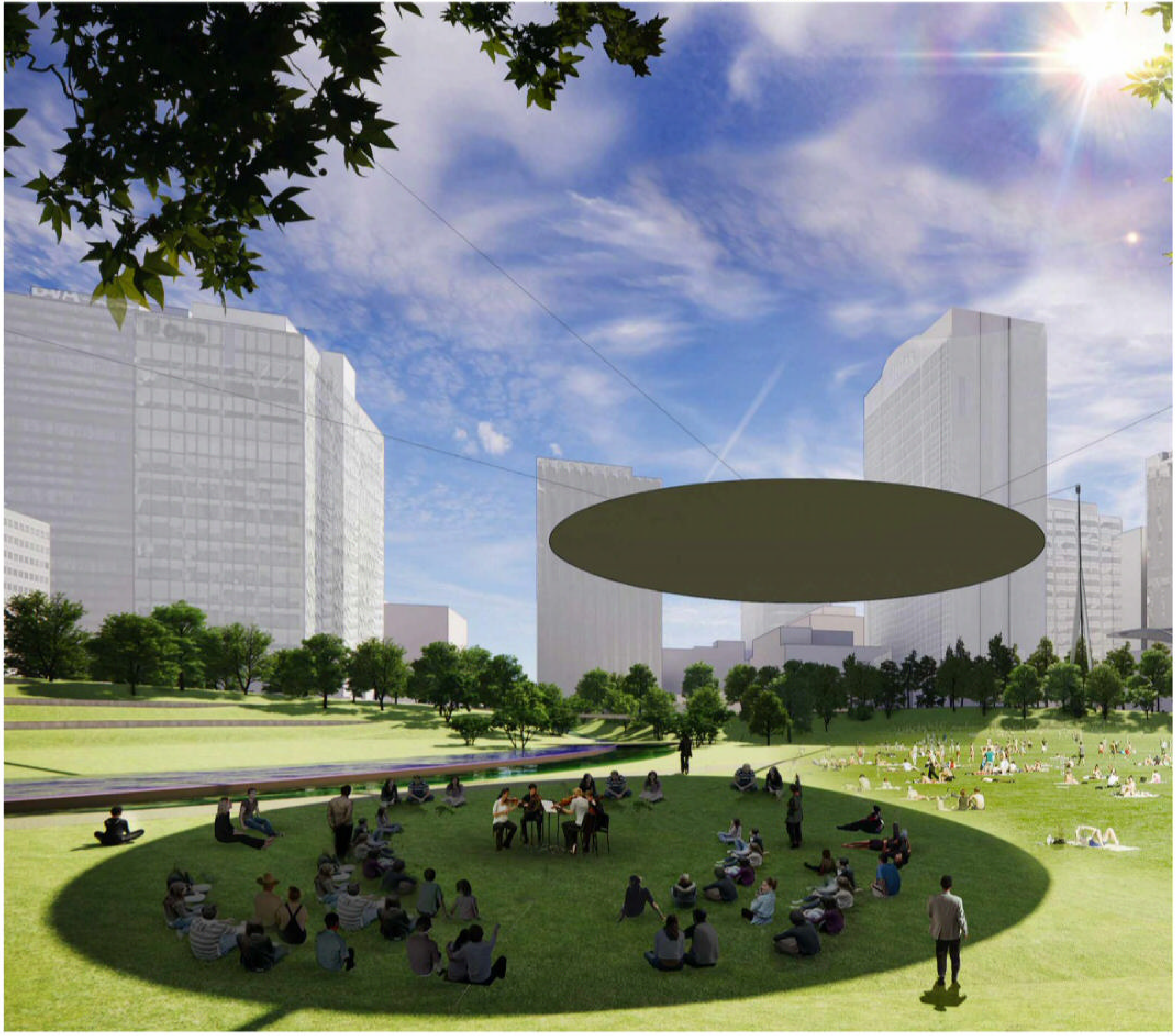
3. VINCENT VAN DORDRECHT



⑥ DOWN TO BUSINESS

An international competition to design RENAZCA, a new public space in Madrid's AZCA business district, has been won by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Gustafson Porter + Bowman and Spanish architects b720 Fermin Vazquez. The reconfigured landscape will create green slopes that enclose a central green space featuring a pair of responsive environmental sculptures, one that reflects sunlight on to areas perpetually cast in shadow and the other creating permanent shade from a hovering disc. The scheme incorporates a productive garden, an outdoor co-working space, a fresh produce market and a water feature inspired by river channels that once crossed the site.

dsrny.com



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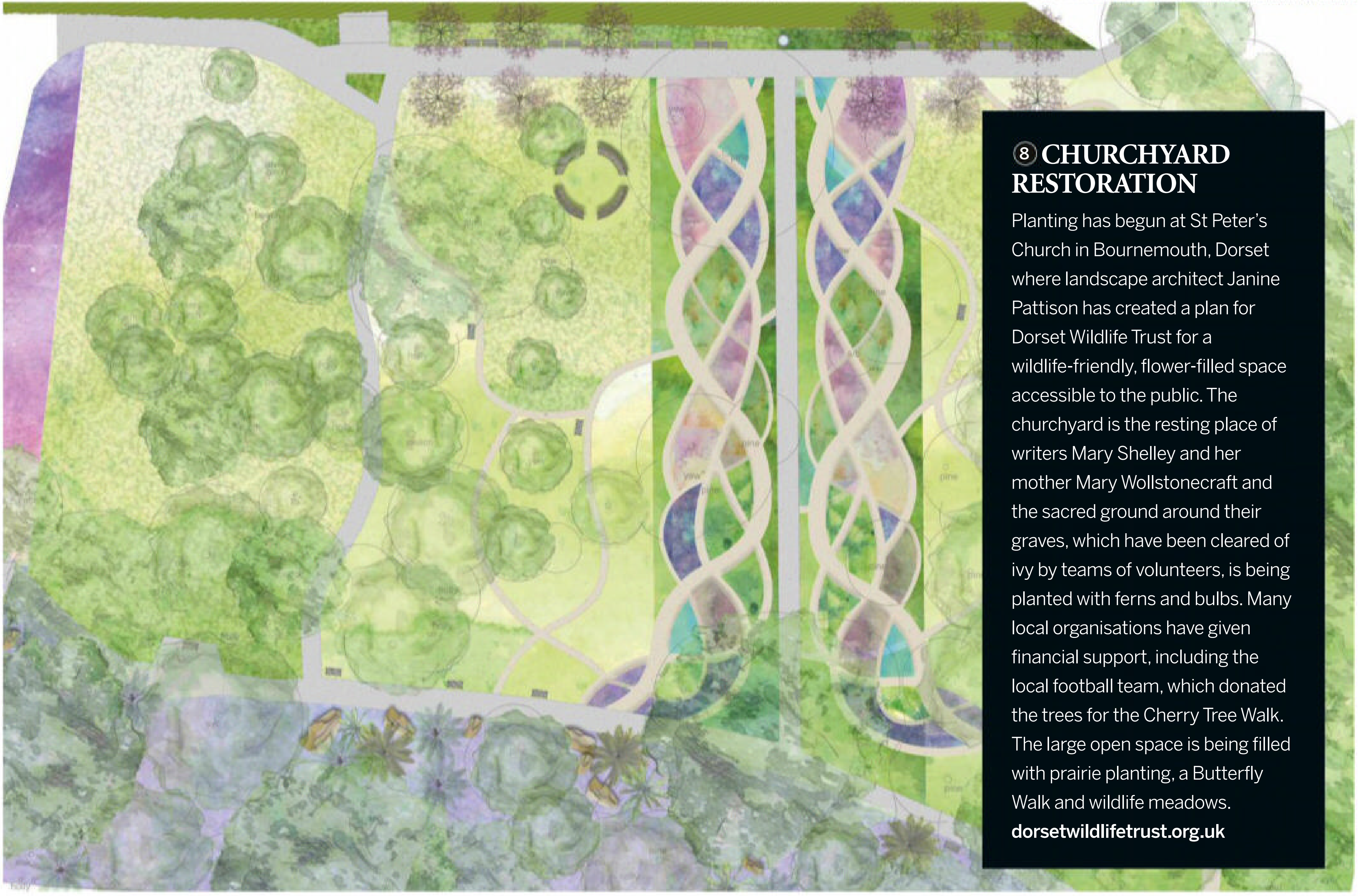
⑦ LOS ANGELES RIVER REIMAGINED

Details have been revealed for an updated masterplan by design firm Gehry Partners and landscape architects OLIN to revitalise an 82km stretch of river drainage in Los Angeles, USA. Among the new proposals are platform parks raised on concrete stilts over the riverbed, which would reconnect communities on either side of the river. Deep troughs filled with soil would be filled with plants and the platforms would be wide enough to contain ponds and trails for horse riding. Landscaped corridors alongside the river would provide further green space. The masterplan will form a development guide for the area for the next 25 years. **larivermasterplan.org**



⑧ CHURCHYARD RESTORATION

Planting has begun at St Peter's Church in Bournemouth, Dorset where landscape architect Janine Pattison has created a plan for Dorset Wildlife Trust for a wildlife-friendly, flower-filled space accessible to the public. The churchyard is the resting place of writers Mary Shelley and her mother Mary Wollstonecraft and the sacred ground around their graves, which have been cleared of ivy by teams of volunteers, is being planted with ferns and bulbs. Many local organisations have given financial support, including the local football team, which donated the trees for the Cherry Tree Walk. The large open space is being filled with prairie planting, a Butterfly Walk and wildlife meadows. **dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk**

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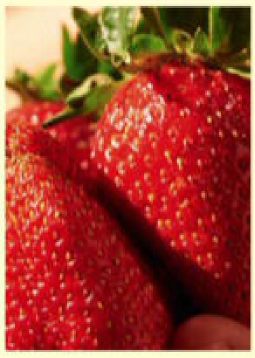

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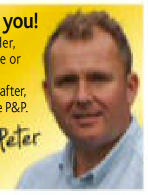

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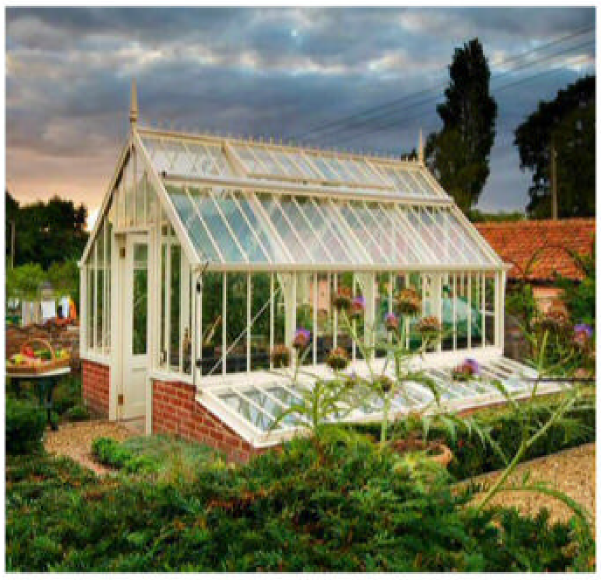
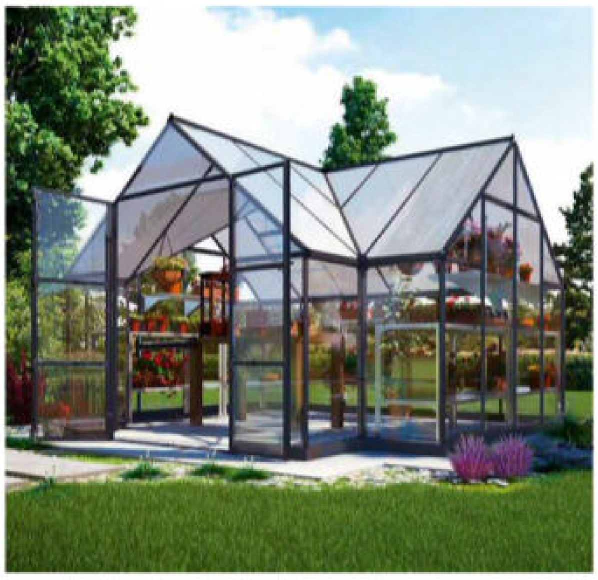
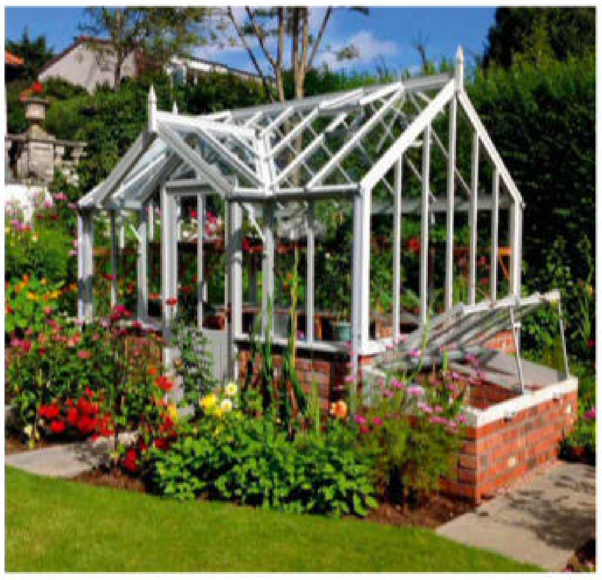


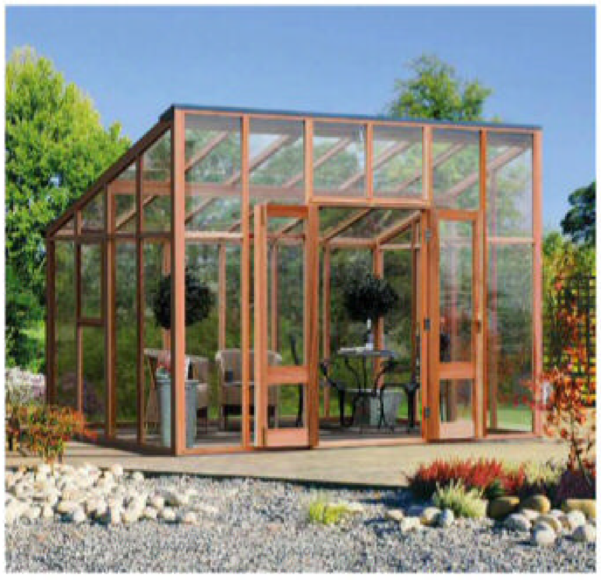
GABLE-ENDED
The National Trust Collection, The Scotney, H3m x W2.6m x D4m, from £15,950, Alitex, 01730 826900, alitex.co.uk



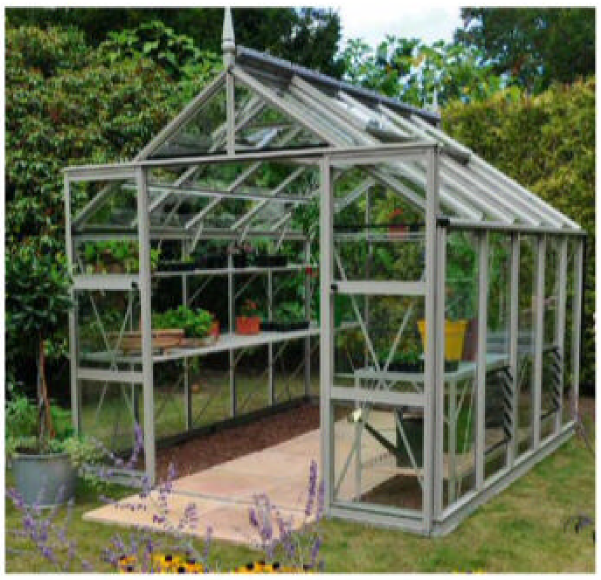
CONTEMPORARY COOL
Palram Victory Orangery, H2.6m x W3.64m x D3m, £1,599.99, Wayfair, 0800 169 0423, wayfair.co.uk



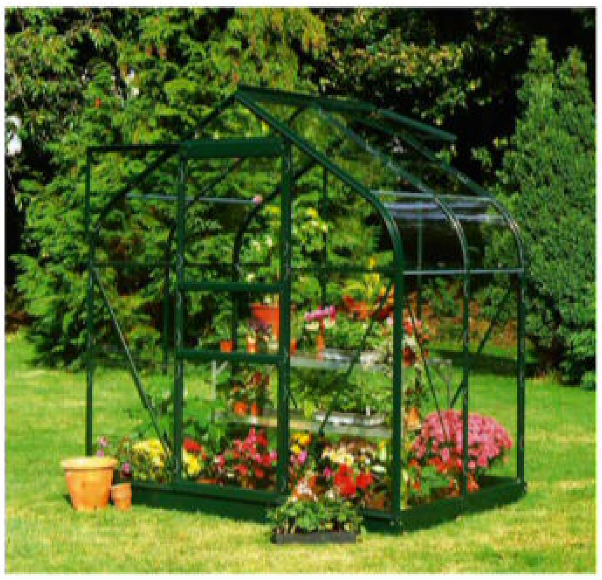
DORMER ENTRANCE
Croft Greenhouse, available in three sizes, price on request, White Cottage Greenhouses 01270 753826, whitecottage.co.uk



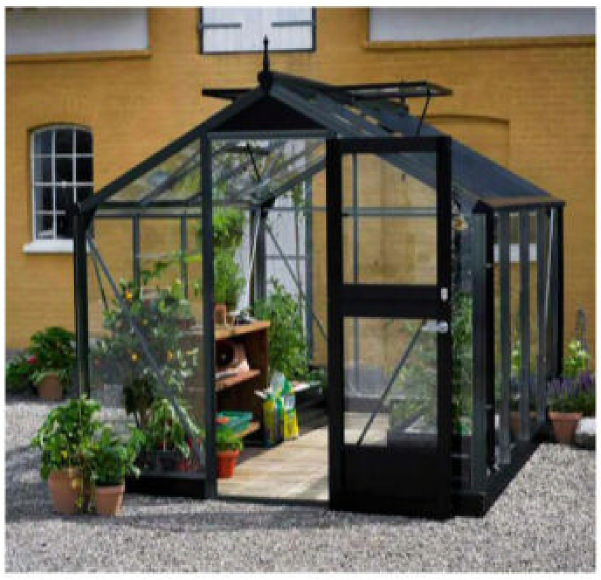
PLENTY OF HEIGHT
The Classic Vision Glasshouse, price on request, Gabriel Ash 01242 662926, gabrielash.com



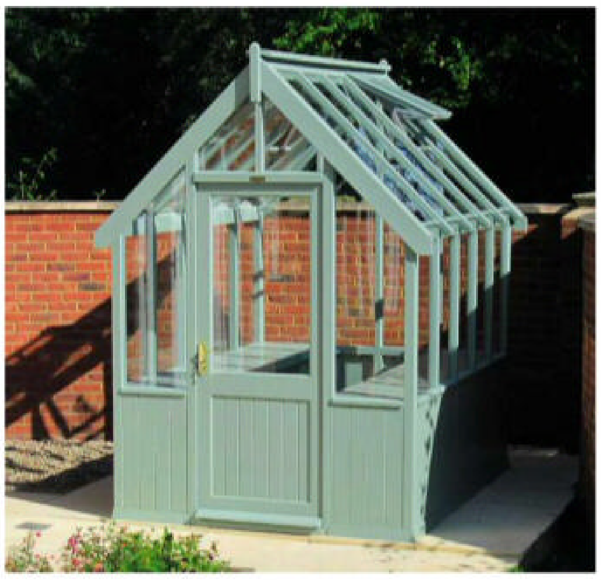
PRACTICAL STYLE
Harrod Superior Greenhouse in willow grey, available in six sizes, from £2,000, Harrod Horticultural, 0333 400 6400, harrodhorticultural.com



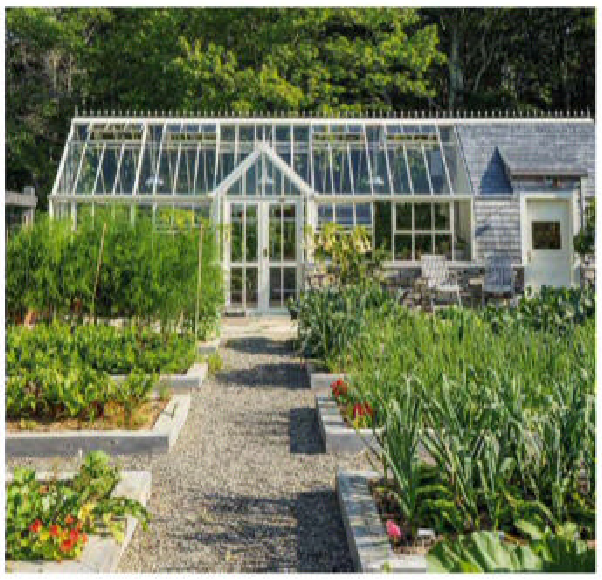
COMPACT DESIGN
Halls Forest Green Supreme, available in six sizes, from £519, Halls Greenhouses, 0121 355 7701, hallsgreenhouses.co.uk



MODERN LOOK
Juliana Compact, available in two sizes, from £1,699, Greenhouses.com, 01242 662926, greenhouses.com



COTTAGE GARDEN CUTE
Crane Garden Buildings Greenhouse, sage green, H2.78m x W1.8m x D2.5m, £5,899, John Lewis, 0345 610 0359, johnlewis.com



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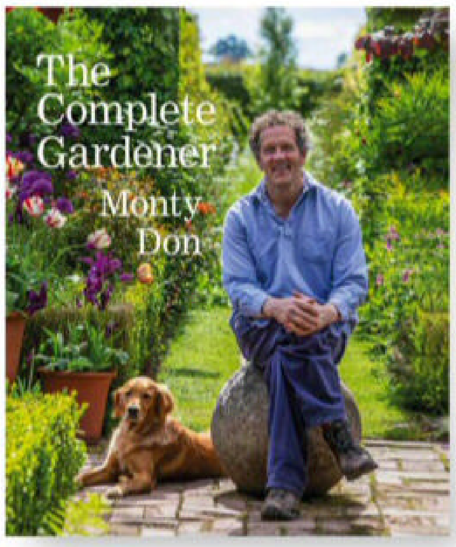
ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS

Palazzo Parisi, the childhood home of Arabella Lennox-Boyd, is just one of the exquisite gardens by the designer featured in her book *Gardens in My Life*, reviewed on page 113.



THE COMPLETE GARDENER

by Monty Don

DK, £27
ISBN 978-0241424308

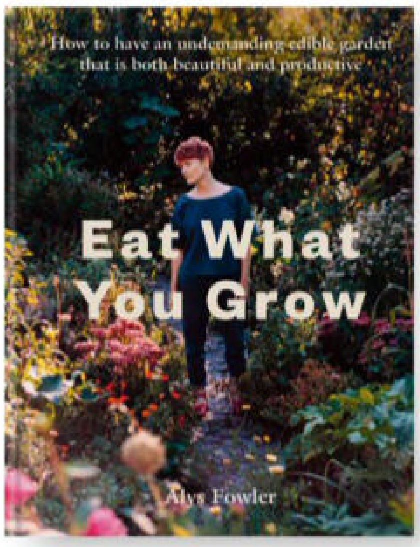
Down-to-earth wisdom from Monty Don, earned over a lifetime; you'll struggle to find such pertinent advice in many other practical gardening books.

Reviewer Jodie Jones is a freelance garden writer.

Viewers of *Gardeners' World* will be familiar with Monty Don's brand of calm, confident advice, and the relaxed but expansive scale of his garden. These two elements come together in a new edition of the book he first wrote some 20 years ago as his last word on the subject of practical gardening, and although the nuts and bolts of plant selection and cultivation remain the same, an awful lot else has changed over the intervening decades.

Box blight has decimated most of the hedges and topiary pieces he was once so proud of, and some of the hundreds of trees he planted have grown problematically large in places. So it goes. The best-laid plans can be derailed, he says, and even the most experienced gardeners will sometimes get things wrong. But Don's opinions have also changed. He has always been a passionate organic gardener, but where once he fetishised the cultivation of soil as a 'measure of manhood', he now embraces no-dig methods and more gentle interventions. Perhaps the most striking quote from this book is his observation that you need 'the humility to accept that your garden is not necessarily more important than anything else'.

My only quibble is that this book may not have the correct title. It does contain all the information necessary to make you a complete gardener, but what these 438 pages really capture is the essence of Mr Don himself. I would have called it *The Full Monty*. I am sure that when he cooks, it is with a pinch of this and a large dollop of that, and his approach to gardening is similarly sensual and instinctive – feel the soil, sense the seasons, savour your harvest. For an absolute novice gardener who is seeking to read instructions in words of one syllable, that may be disconcerting, but for everyone else with a passion for gardening, this is the perfect guide to cultivating an appropriate mindset.


How to have an undemanding edible garden that is both beautiful and productive
Eat What You Grow
Alys Fowler

EAT WHAT YOU GROW

by Alys Fowler

Kyle Books, £22
ISBN 978-0857838988

A thoroughly rich and engaging practical guide to creating a wildlife-friendly edible garden that is as beautiful as it is utterly delicious.

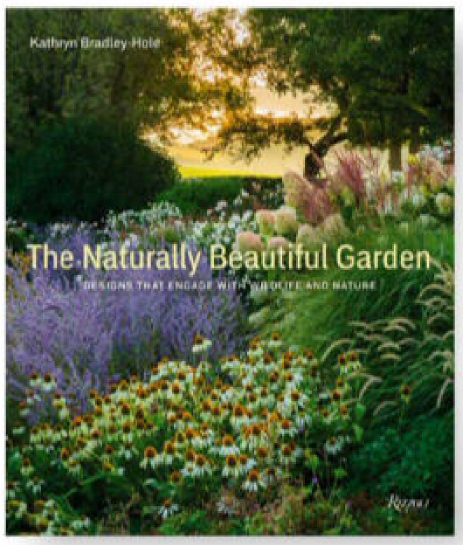
Reviewer Hannah Gardner is a horticulturist and garden writer.

The notion of an undemanding edible garden has always seemed like an impossibility to me, but on reading *Eat What You Grow*, I realise that I am quite wrong. In this impressive book, gardener and writer Alys Fowler talks us through how to create a garden that is beautiful, bountiful and lower maintenance than your average vegetable patch. Her approach, which she describes as a polyculture, hinges upon 'a good backbone of perennial edibles' that can be relied on year after year to produce a healthy harvest, alongside a complement of annual plants that you can sow and grow to suit your tastes as well as your capacity.

Split into three main sections, the book takes a holistic approach by building from the basics, which are edible perennials in a variety of sizes and growth habits, up to fillers that self-seed, through to toppings, which are annual plants that will thrive in this mixed system. Among the many possibilities, there are familiar faces such as fig trees, rocket and beetroot, as well as less commonplace plants and varieties such as Korean celery (*Dystaenia takesimana*) and mashua (*Tropaeolum tuberosum*), a flowering plant from the Andes with edible tubers. There was also mention of a few plants that are grown ornamentally but are also in fact edible. So now I'm hoping to try the young shoots of my hostas (if I can get to them before the slugs do). I was especially intrigued by the Edible Water Garden section, as this is entirely unknown territory for me and I'd love to try my hand at growing edible aquatic plants.

What I enjoyed most about this book is that it is a galvanising treatise on the possibility of a truly nature-centric edible garden, a celebration of biodiversity as well as deliciousness. And as I now embark on my second year in a new garden, *Eat What You Grow* has provided a source of inspiration to consider more ambitious plans for each of the seasons.

BOOK REVIEWS


Kathryn Bradley-Hole
The Naturally Beautiful Garden
DESIGNS THAT ENGAGE WITH WILDLIFE AND NATURE
Rizzoli

THE NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL GARDEN: CONTEMPORARY DESIGNS TO PLEASE THE EYE AND SUPPORT NATURE

by Kathryn Bradley-Hole

Rizzoli International
Publications, £45
ISBN 978-0847870097

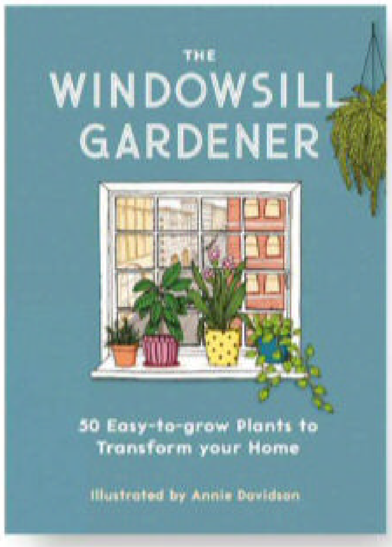
A beautifully curated tasting menu of exquisitely different gardens that share a common ethos: to create a more beautiful world in sync with nature.

Reviewer Marian Boswall is a landscape architect.

Kathryn Bradley-Hole has broken the mould with this beautiful book that is neither coffee table compendium nor garden design manual, but shares the best elements of both. Smaller than her previous collections, it fits perfectly on a bedside table alongside poetry or cookery books for late-night inspiration. And like the best cookbooks, this is a tasting menu of recipes to create a healthier world, here of vibrant spaces with a common aim: to garden within rather than against nature.

Chapters follow the themes of the natural environment – Among the Trees, By the Seashore, In the Heat and Drought – or the curated worlds of City Sanctuaries, Country Retreats and Rolling Landscapes for Public Pleasure. The variety and originality of the gardens chosen from locations including California, Denmark, New Zealand and Texas, as well as those closer to home, create a lively freshness to each beautifully designed spread, with stunning images from photographers at the top of their game. Each unique garden has been developed with the environment in mind, with a beauty that goes deeper than clever layout, successional planting or visual impact. The designers have put the natural world to the forefront of their thinking, and generously share their insights, from Sarah Murch on creating a swimming pond at Ellicar and Christopher Bradley-Hole on his Chiltern landscape in miniature at Fayland House, to Karen Roos using owls to control rodents at The Newt in Somerset and James Basson discussing loosening control in order to gain interest.

Between garden descriptions, the author's thoughtful essays give readers useful ideas, bolstered by a further reading section for those smitten and curious to deepen their knowledge. At once a stunning and timely book, it is the view of ourselves as an intrinsic part of the natural world that is changing the way we garden.


THE WINDOWSILL GARDENER
50 Easy-to-grow Plants to Transform your Home
Illustrated by Annie Davidson

THE WINDOWSILL GARDENER : 50 EASY-TO-GROW PLANTS TO TRANSFORM YOUR HOME

Illustrated by Annie Davidson with text by Liz Marvin

Michael O'Mara Books, £9.99
ISBN 978-1789291957

A light-hearted source of inspiration for indoor growers looking to get into edibles, with some surprising and rather fun options to try.

Reviewer Alice Vincent is a gardener and garden writer.

How to solve the problem of wanting to grow more than houseplants without much in the way of outdoor space? *The Windowsill Gardener* has some ideas. This jaunty little book is fuelled by a can-do attitude and a light, breezy tone that makes indoor growing accessible for the uninitiated – and goes beyond the basics covered by other beginner gardening books and into braver territory.

The book captures the spirit of the novice grower and offers growing activities for around the home. Bookshelves, kitchen worktops and bathrooms all come under the broad windowsill umbrella, encouraging readers to see their home in a new light – one that would be best suited for growing in. This practical advice is jollied along by cheap and cheerful suggestions, such as using recycled household items as growing containers – old coffee bags for chillies, tin cans for herbs and veg pallets for microgreen crops. There's an emphasis on reducing waste, with carrot tops, celery and lettuce all being used for regrowing, rather than going into the bin. Annie Davidson's charming illustrations capture the delight of first growing, as well as featuring urban backdrops that are rarely seen in gardening books – a refreshing touch.

Liz Marvin, who has previously written books on astrology and trees, has a witty patter at times – dried parsley is 'potpourri-tasting' – and I particularly enjoyed the section on microgreens, including broccoli, beetroot and kale. There's also a handy step-by-step guide to creating newspaper pots.

It is cheering to see more unusual plants such as chervil, lemongrass, makrut lime (*Citrus hystrix*), ginger and pineapple included in a beginner's gardening book. Overall, there is an emphasis on rolling up your sleeves and just having a go, which is key tenet to any gardening journey, especially for a beginner.

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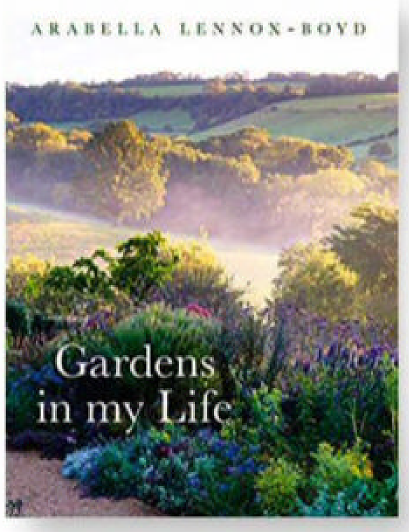
BOOK REVIEWS



GARDENS IN MY LIFE

by Arabella Lennox-Boyd

Apollo, £40
ISBN 978-1789545685

Disarmingly candid memoir from a 'grande dame' of garden design, filled with pragmatic insights into the practical business of being a designer.

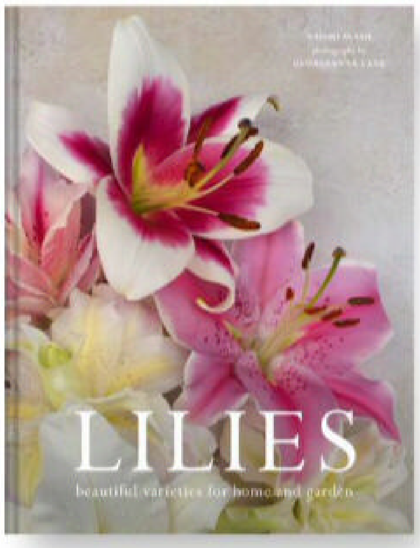
Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

This book perpetuates the tendency among leading garden designers to offer assessments of their own careers, but it is nevertheless refreshingly different in its way. That is because the author writes with such disarming candour about her 'process', while refraining from larding the text with pseudo-philosophical asides.

Arabella Lennox-Boyd's client list includes grandees such as the Duke of Westminster (of Eaton Hall, Cheshire, which must surely be her key work, beside her own garden), trendy institutions such as London's Serpentine Gallery, and a smattering of rock stars. One picture caption, relating to her work at Il Palagio in Tuscany, begins, 'I was pleased to agree with Sting's idea for a curved path …'. An ungenerous observer might call this almost beyond parody. But it's not name-dropping – it is simply and sincerely meant. This path clearly has 'poise', which is the one word that might sum up the designer's style.

A certain artlessness pervades the text and is nearly always appealing. We learn that as a child it was camping trips near Rome that 'gave my life new purpose and meaning' – hinting at an unhappiness that is never fully expressed. Lennox-Boyd spent her summers at her family's 15th-century Palazzo Parisi near Rome, which could only be reached by mule. There, she lived with her mother and her Scottish nanny in three rooms (out of 40) with no mains electricity, water or curtains, and with bats flitting about. Her mother had no interest in gardening, preferring to pursue business ventures such as snail breeding. Only much later was Lennox-Boyd able to make a garden there.

Sixteen gardens are presented here, but the highlight must be the designer's own garden at Gresgarth, in Lancashire. Only here has Lennox-Boyd achieved a full and satisfying fusion of spatial grandeur and horticultural plenitude.



LILIES: BEAUTIFUL VARIETIES FOR HOME AND GARDEN

by Naomi Slade

Pavilion, £25
ISBN 978-1911663003

A visually beautiful and well-written exploration into the colourful trumpets of lilies, from large flowers for cutting to smaller, naturalistic forms.

Reviewer Jack Wallington is a landscape designer and writer.

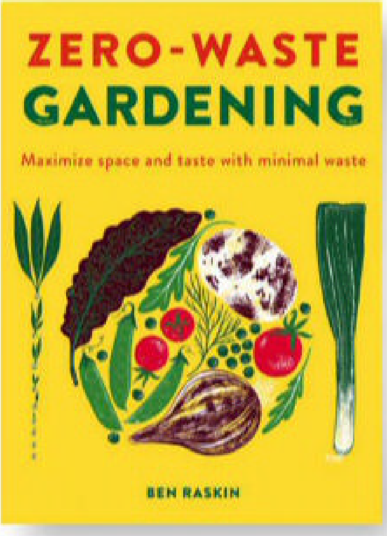
I love deep-dive books on specific genera of plants; they're perhaps my favourite of gardening books because they push gardening knowledge to the very limits. What I want from such books is to gain an in-depth, overall understanding of the plant's botany and to be inspired by new plants to try in all manner of garden design situations. *Lilies* by Naomi Slade does all of these things and is the latest in her series of comprehensive plant studies, alongside those on peonies, dahlias, tulips and hydrangeas.

The book is split into three main sections: the history and botany of lilies; a selection of the author's favourite species and cultivars; and a guide to growing them. Starting with an overview of the history of lilies and their importance throughout humanity's past, the introduction soon moves on to the botany of the plants themselves, exploring their anatomy and how they are categorised into nine main divisions based on their structure and other features. I must also make special mention of the beautiful, hand-drawn illustrations by Somang Lee that demonstrate quite complicated botanical information very clearly.

Individual plant profiles then celebrate a large array of species and cultivars in all shapes and colours, supported by Georgianna Lane's sumptuous photography. Each profile states the plant's use in the garden and includes specific growing information, such as size, preferred soil type and flowering period.

Finally, the section on growing lilies tells you everything you could ever possibly want to know about raising lilies yourself, from propagation to staking and pests. Overall, it's a beautiful book that will serve as an eye-opener for beginners to flick through for ideas, with all of the detail to help you become an expert in lily growing. Pick it up to choose a new lily or follow all the advice to become a lily pro.

BOOK REVIEWS



ZERO-WASTE GARDENING: MAXIMIZE SPACE AND TASTE WITH MINIMAL WASTE
by Ben Raskin

Frances Lincoln, £14.99
ISBN 978-0711262331

A beautifully illustrated, plot-to-plate guide aimed at cutting waste throughout the growing cycle, from sowing seed to storing and eating the produce.

Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

Many of us are now painfully aware of how much we need to reduce our waste to lessen our impact on the climate and on nature. We are increasingly conscious about minimising plastic use, buying second-hand instead of new, and investing in things that are made and built to last.

Such mindfulness applies to gardening and the food we eat, from how we affect the health of our soils to how much of our food is wasted. Ben Raskin, head of horticulture at the Soil Association, has produced this book to help hone our gardening skills so we can minimise waste throughout the growing cycle.

The book is divided into four chapters, covering space, taste, waste and plants, as Raskin focuses on crop planning to use space cleverly, grow the tastiest food, and achieve the right yield for a household. He looks at how to store and preserve plant produce, how to save energy, water and materials, and use natural fertilisers.

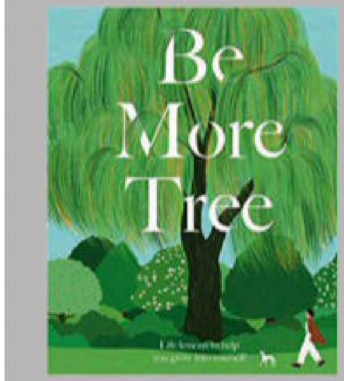
In the plants chapter, which makes up half of the 180-page book, Raskin lists 60 crops for zero-waste gardening. Almost every plant is given a double-page spread detailing when to sow, plant, harvest and eat, as well as the plant's yield (in the case of the aubergine, 2.75kg per square metre). There are also growing and zero-waste tips, plus, most helpfully, what to do if you have too much of a crop. A glut of radishes, says Raskin, can be turned into a quick pickle. Bake kale into crisps, freeze leeks, make pumpkin wine.

Almost every page is adorned with a beautiful colour illustration – from a pair of secateurs and a single chard leaf to full-page pictures of brimming pickling jars – by Alice Pattullo, whose hand often decorates the pages of *Gardens Illustrated*.

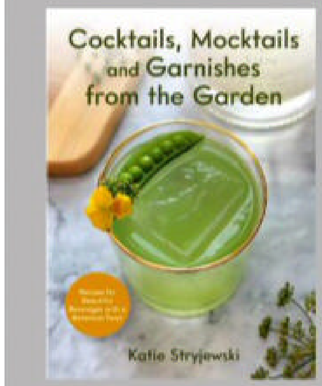
I particularly liked the novel ideas incorporated into the text, such as the homemade solar dryer. Overall, this useful handbook is chock-full of inspiration.

Other books

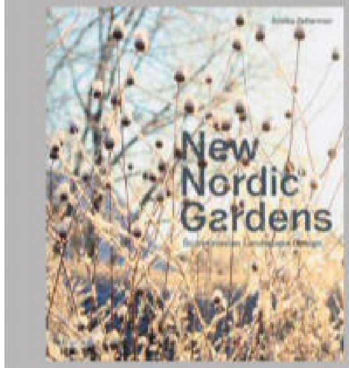
Enjoy this selection offering delicious drink recipes, terrarium gardening, stunning Nordic design inspiration and more



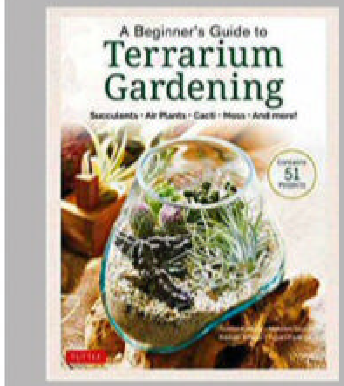
BE MORE TREE
by Alison Davies
Quadrille Publishing, £7.99
ISBN 978-1787136243
Fans of Davies' earlier book *Be More Bee* will love her celebration of trees, and how humans can benefit from quite literally branching out.



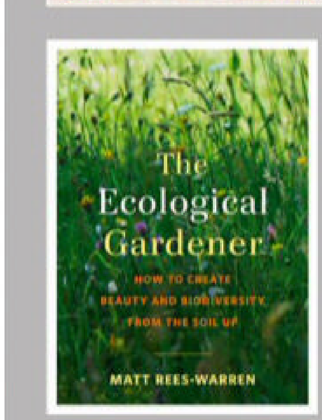
COCKTAILS, MOCKTAILS AND GARNISHES FROM THE GARDEN
by Katie Stryjewski
Yellow Pear Press, £16.95
ISBN 978-1642504965
Full of fun and modern recipes for delicious drinks, this vibrant book provides tips on how to grow your own herb bar and garnish garden.



NEW NORDIC GARDENS
by Annika Zetterman
Thames & Hudson Ltd, £25
ISBN 978-0500296141
A re-release updated with a survey documenting the best gardens in the Nordic regions over the past ten years. Expect stunning photography and exceptional design.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TERRARIUM GARDENING
by Sueko Katsuji et al
Tuttle Publishing, £12.99
ISBN 978-0804854078
This beginner's guide is packed with 52 projects to teach you how to create an exciting range of stunning, diverse terrariums.



THE ECOLOGICAL GARDENER
by Matt Rees-Warren
Chelsea Green Publishing Co, £20
ISBN 978-1645020073
This inspirational book, aimed at novice and experienced gardeners, talks you through how to create a sustainable garden that's a haven for nature and wildlife.

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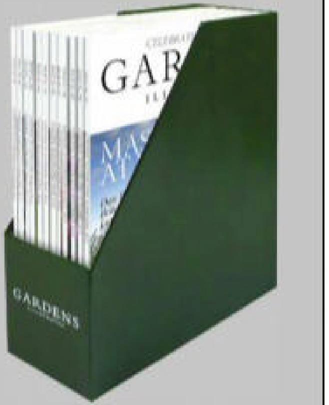
A fresh green corner



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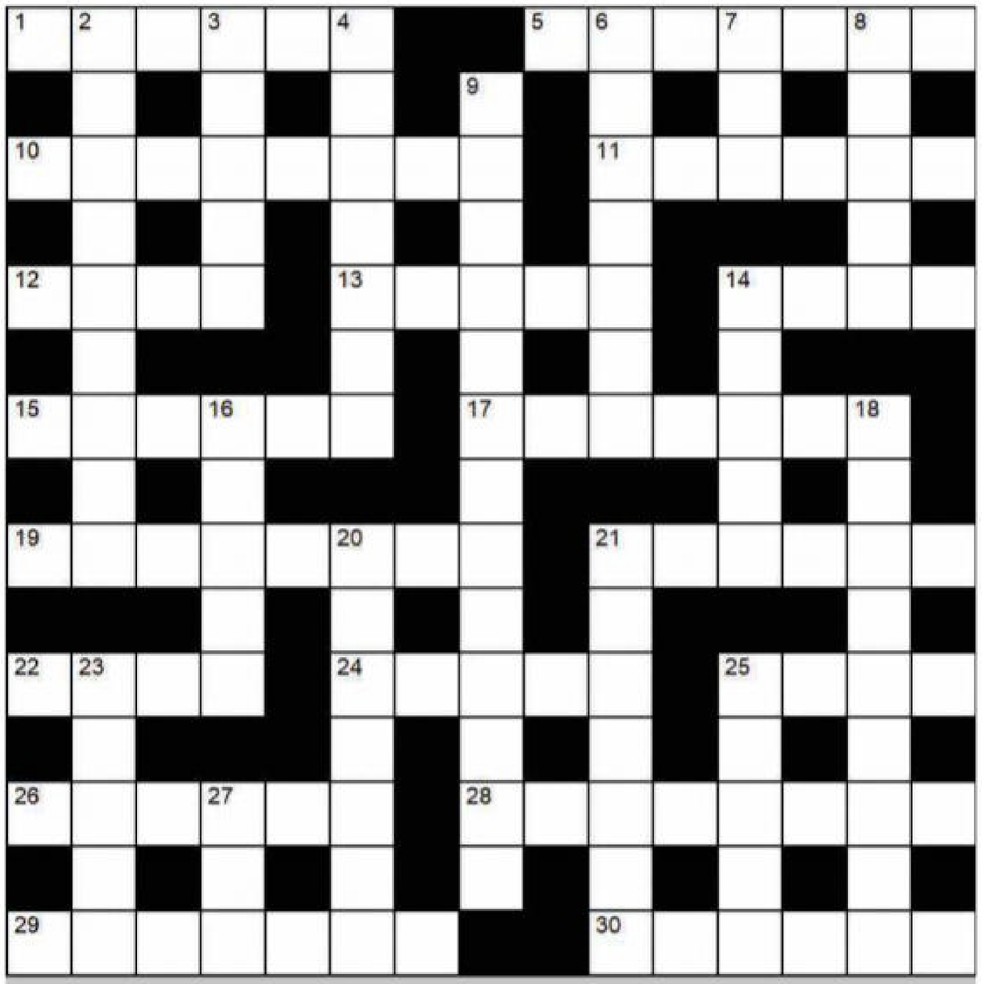
Crossword



ACROSS

1 I confused *Ribes* for the candytuft genus (6)

5 As the throats of foxglove flowers may be… espied? (7)

10 A catmint with 19 across-coloured flowers – a very rare event indeed (4,4)

11 A globular, swede-like white-rooted brassica (6)

12 Genus of 'avens' plant – hidden by huge umbellifers (4)

13 Eg moist part of peach (5)

14 Fungal disease – in potatoes, cabbages? (4)

15 A series of *Echinacea* (coneflower) – 'Great Heavens'? (3,3)

17 Proprietary moisture-retentive straw – makes street lurch awkwardly! (7)

19 Aromatic plant in Lamiaceae family with purple flower spikes (8)

21 Piet ___, Dutch plantsman, landscapist, author… of 'Old UFO' perhaps (6)

22 See 7 down

24 A 2 down type of apple tree with red fruits – and Brazilian dance (5)

25 A long, knobbly nutty-flavoured potato – in many allotments (4)

26 Genus of 'Silk-tassel bush' with grey-green catkins – $1,000 array (mixed) (6)

28 Genus of daisy-like 'fleabane' – er, ignore hybrid (8)

29 One who charges exorbitantly for an *Urtica dioica*? (7)

30 Tracks down plant stems (6)

DOWN

2 Columnar-shaped apple tree – 'Danseuse'? (9)

3 Genus of rhubarb produces old-fashioned head cold! (5)

4 Common name of *Nicandra physalodes* – said to scare off winged insect? (4-3)

6/23 Insectivorous perennial of eg *Nepenthes alata* x *ventricosa* (7,5)

7/22 Fungal disease of acer leaves – twisted taproots, lacking oxygen (3,4)

8 An early flowering small pampas grass – partly revitalised (5)

9 *Brugmansia*'s common name – makes a heavenly sound? (6,7)

14 Firm, like the heart of a Savoy cabbage (5)

16 Exhausted (5)

18 Common name of *Alcea rosea*: classic cottage garden plant (9)

20 Infection: a seed is affected (7)

21 Fertilised seeds develop here – nothing changes! (7)

23 See 6 down

25 Some dare call… another commonly used name for 'bamboo palm' *Dypsis lutescens* (5)

27 Eg extent of a root's growth (3)

• **Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the June issue**

SOLUTIONS TO THE APRIL ISSUE'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 8 Erica **9** Grevillea **10** Tendril **11** Triumph **12** Avens **14** Ended **16** Sun **17/15** African daisy **18** Spignel **20** Air **22** Samoa **24** Yucca **25** Dibbled **27** Organic **30** Verbascum **31** April. **DOWN 1** Bent **2** Lion's ear **3** Hair **4** Heated **5** Gigi **6** Plumes **7** Lachenalia **9** Galleon **12** Adam and Eve **13** Sacks **18** Sea foam **19** Nicandra **21** Robert **23** Medick **26** Leaf **28** Goat **29** Culm.

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READER OFFER

Save on these collections of beardless iris from Woottens of Wenhaston

Irises make a colourful addition to the garden. The rhizomatous irises are divided into bearded (such as those in our Cedric Morris feature – page 74) and non-bearded forms, such as the elegant Siberian iris with tall, flowering stems and narrow, architectural leaves. The sibiricas flower in late spring (later than the bearded examples), bringing brilliant pops of colour to borders. They can be planted in sun or shade and will thrive in most soil types. Other beardless species include *Iris pseudacorus*, our native yellow flag iris, and the purple-black *Iris chrysographes* – both of these species preferring damp soil in partial shade. Find more details at woottensplants.com

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IRIS PSEUDACORUS 'VARIEGATA' BY CHRISTOPHER BURROWS; *IRIS* 'CAESAR'S BROTHER' BY ANNEKE DOORENBOSCH FLOWERS / BOTH ALAMY STOCK PHOTO.

Iris 'Caesar's Brother'.

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Iris 'Melton Red Flare'.

***Iris* 'Caesar's Brother' (Sib)**
Dark-blue/purple flowers in abundance. May to June. H 70cm.

***Iris* 'Sparkling Rose' (Sib)**
Clear-pink flowers. June to July. H 70cm.

***Iris* 'Silver Edge' (Sib)**
Medium-blue flowers with a silver edge. June. H 55cm. AGM.

***Iris* 'Tropic Night' (Sib)**
Dark-purple flowers. H 90cm. AGM.

***Iris* 'Melton Red Flare' (Sib)**
Rich-red/purple flowers with a yellow-veined throat. June. H 90cm.

Iris pseudacorus.

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Iris chrysographes.

Iris pseudacorus 'Variegata'.

Iris pseudacorus
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Iris chrysographes
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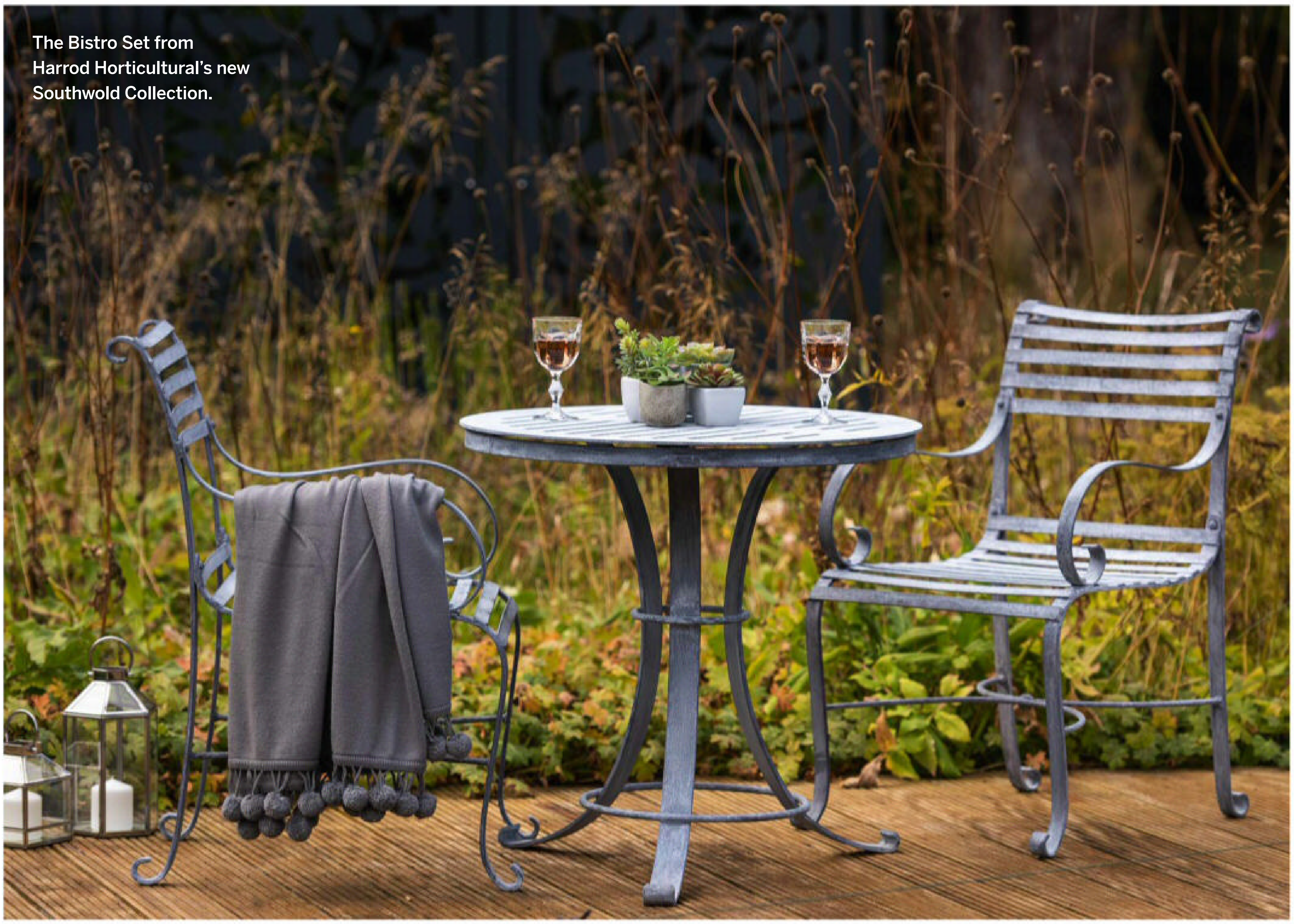
Win a Southwold Collection Bistro Set from Harrod Horticultural*



The Bistro Set from Harrod Horticultural's new Southwold Collection.

With summer days ahead of us, we can start thinking of relaxed moments in the garden and convivial gatherings with family and friends. Now might be the time to upgrade your garden furniture; choose items that are comfortable, long-lasting and practical.

The Southwold Collection by Harrod Horticultural is a delightful, new garden range of high-quality, traditional, handcrafted designs. It includes formal dining, bistro and coffee table furniture sets, as well as complementary pieces such as pergolas, obelisks, plant supports and trellis. Hot-dip galvanised and hand-etched to give an antique, silvery-grey patina, each piece is structurally guaranteed for 25 years.

One of the most popular items in the collection is the elegant Bistro Set. This comprises an attractive, slatted table top with three gracefully curved legs that end in scrolled feet and strong ring bracing. The arms of the carver chairs feature broadly sweeping serpentine curves, also ending in scrolls, which echo the detail of the feet and the rolled-top back. The chair frame is robust and ergonomically superior – built from strips of steel, precisely sized to give maximum support and allow the correct degree of 'give' as you sit down, it provides great comfort with or without a cushion.

For the full range within the collection go to harrodhorticultural.com

COMPETITION

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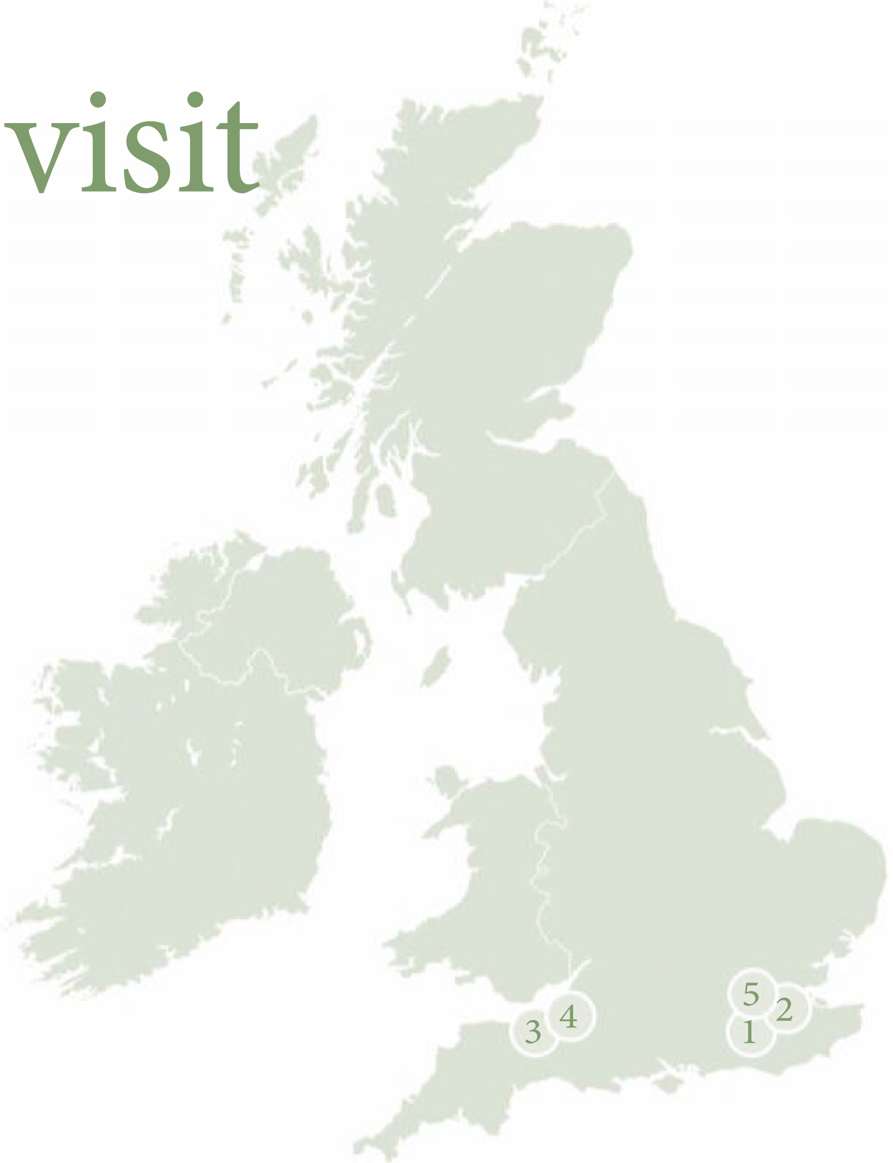
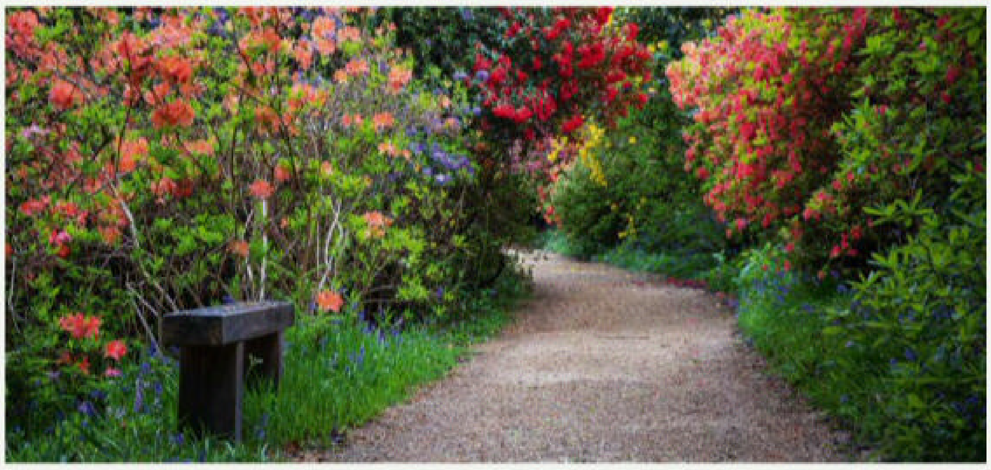
Spring gardens to visit

Spring is a great time to visit this collection of stunning gardens





1 LEONARDSLEE LAKES & GARDENS

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2 GREAT COMP GARDEN

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Nr Sevenoaks Kent TN15 8QS | 01732 885094 | greatcompgarden.co.uk

3 HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

Nestled beneath the Quantock Hills AONB, Hestercombe's formal gardens, designed by Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edwin Lutyens, reawaken to contemplate their 'vibrating' colour. Find your inner tranquility as you meander through the lush Georgian Landscape Garden, with views from the exotic follies.

Taunton, Somerset TA2 8LQ | 01823 413923 | hestercombe.com

4 THE BISHOP'S PALACE & GARDENS, WELLS

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Wells, Somerset BA5 2PD | 01749 988111 | bishopspalace.org.uk

5 CHARTWELL

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Westerham, Kent TN16 1PS | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

Spring nursery guide

Get inspired for late spring with the best plant and bulb suppliers

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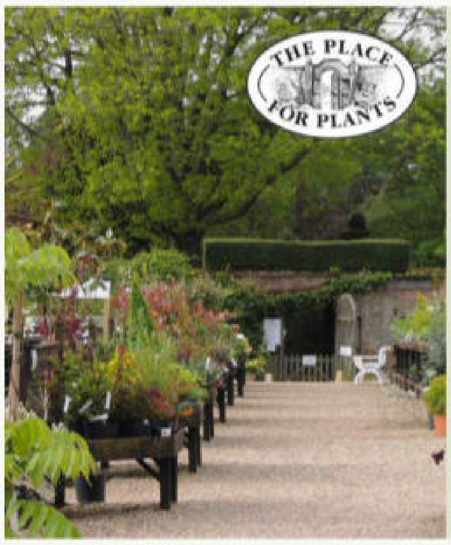

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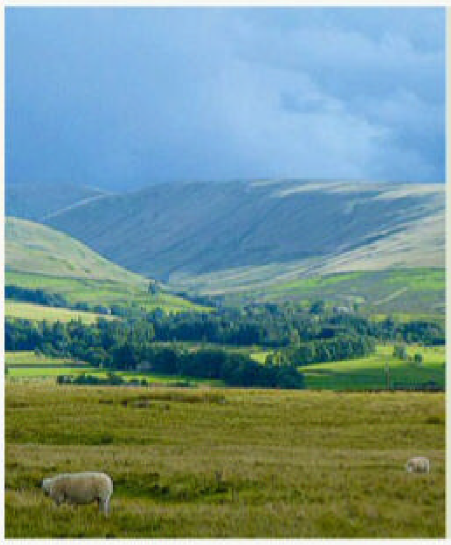

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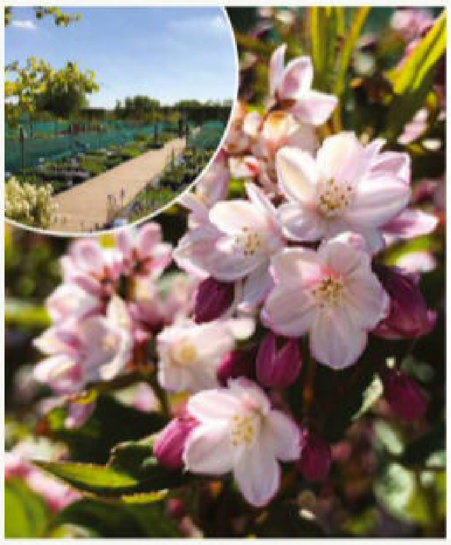

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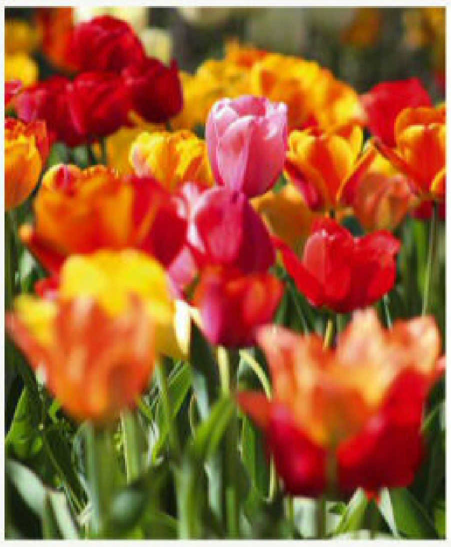

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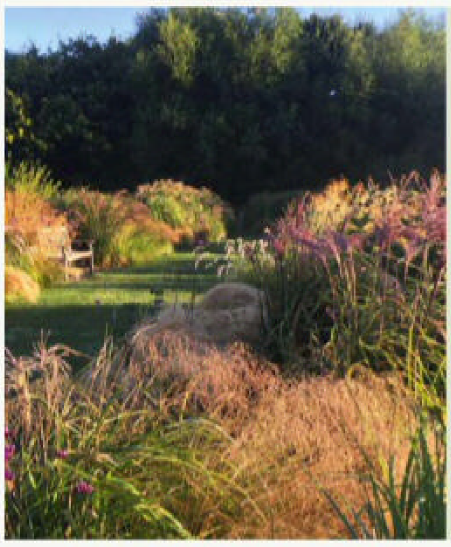

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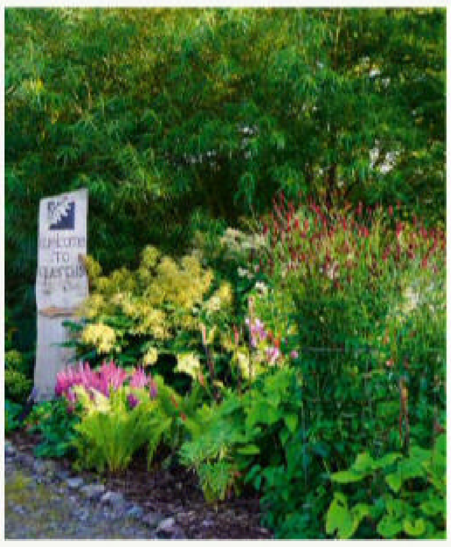

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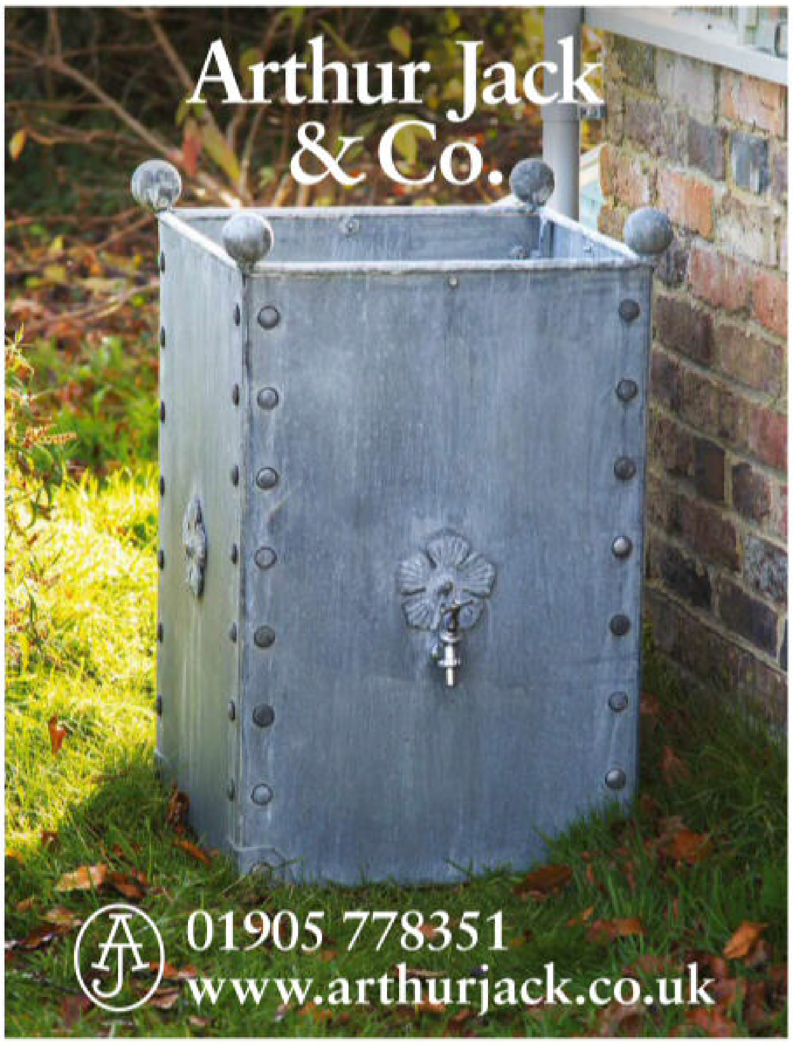

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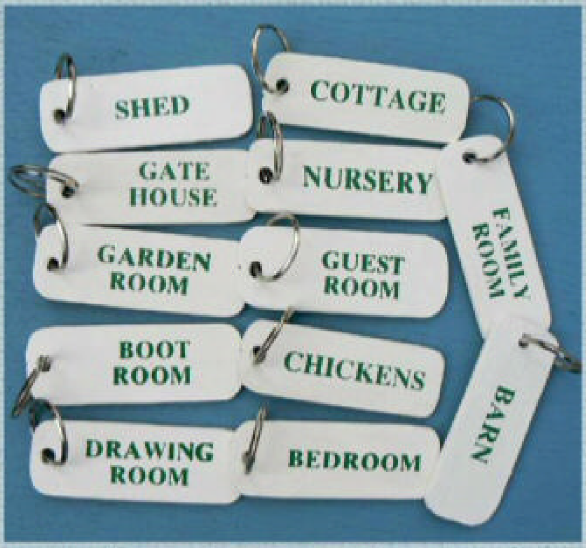
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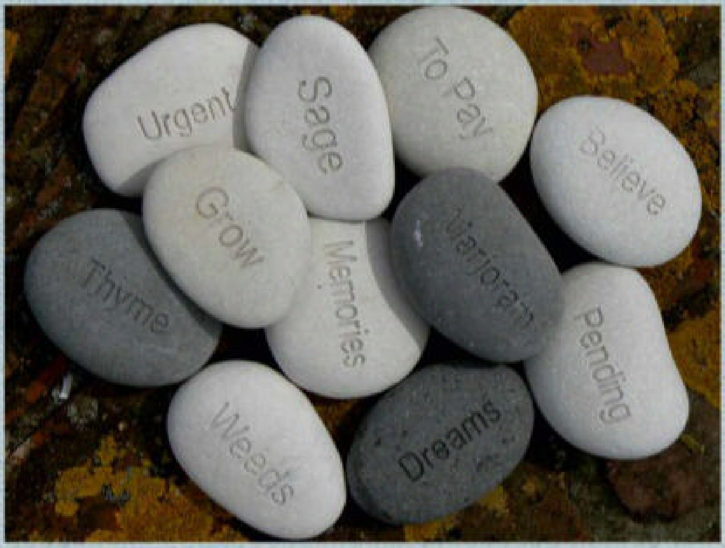
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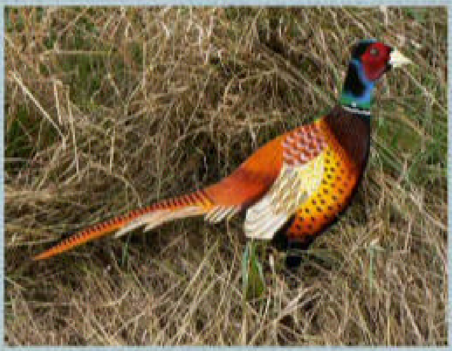

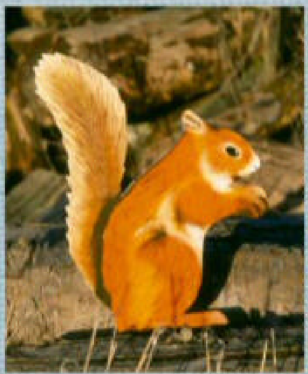

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JUNE ISSUE

- Abundant summer planting in the beautiful garden of a Dorset rectory
- The best and most natural-looking single roses to bring elegance to your garden
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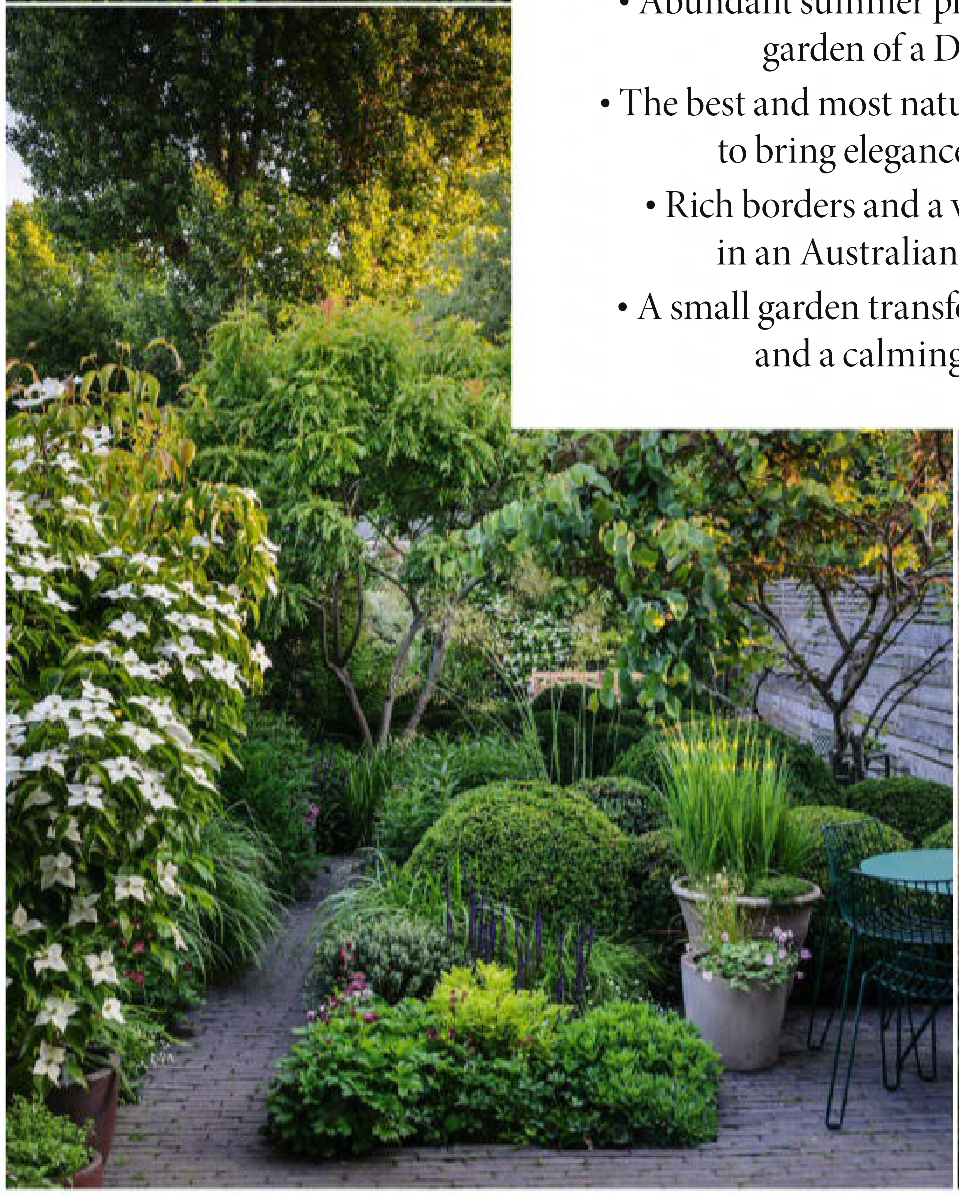
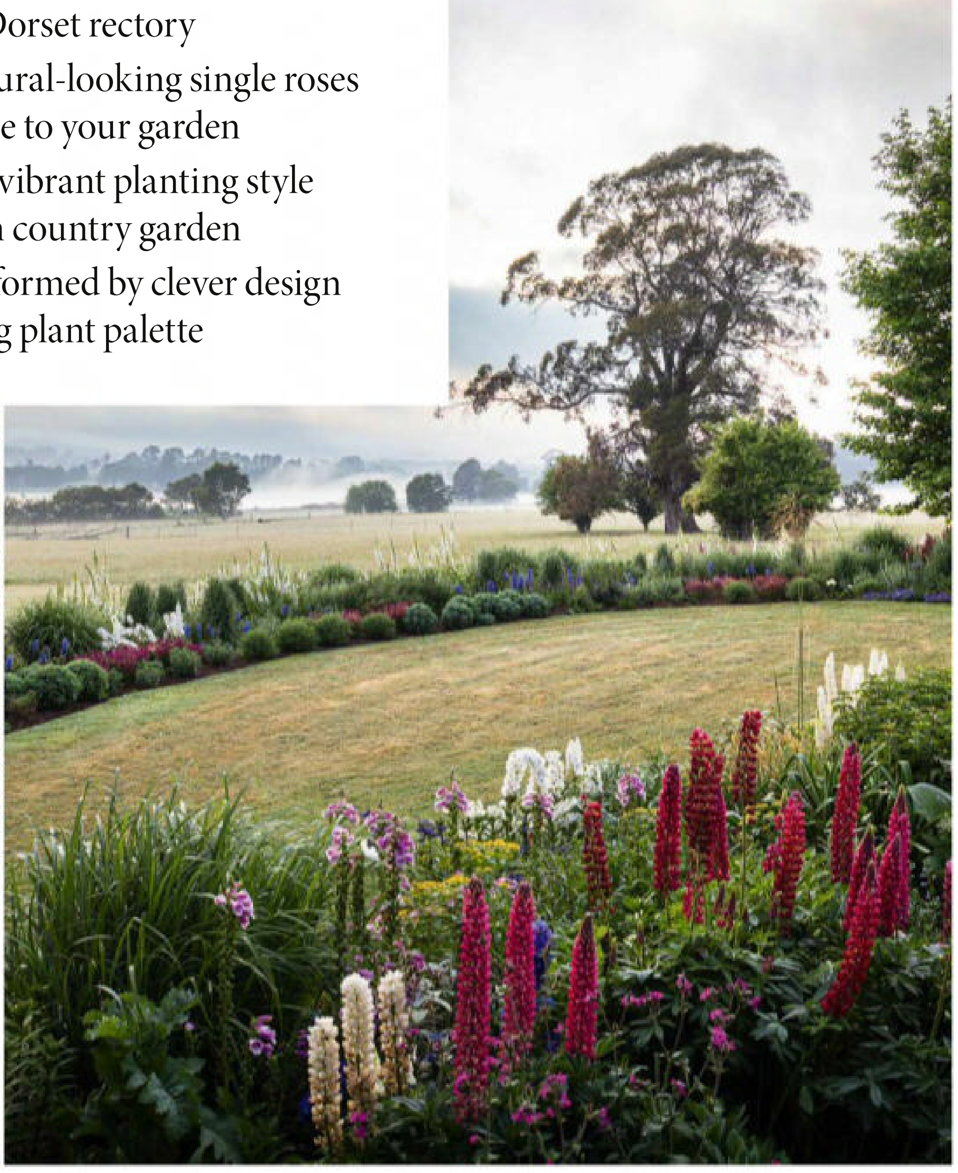
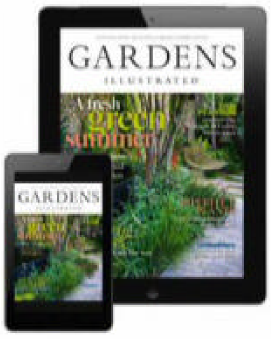




JASON INGRAM, CLAIRE TAKACS



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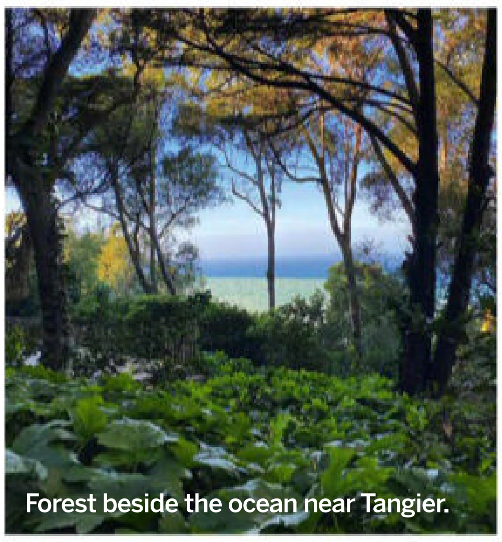
How to spend a gardener's weekend in…

Tangier

Known as the gateway to Europe, the Moroccan port of Tangier is a laid-back melting pot of cultures that feed into its vibrant gardening and artisanal movements

Perched on the tip of North Africa and overlooking southern Spain, Tangier has always attracted a certain kind of adventurer. As the city changes, and subversive behaviour is overtaken by a passion for decorating, Tangerines old and new are creating free-spirited gardens, not all of which are behind closed doors.


Forest beside the ocean near Tangier.

City of light

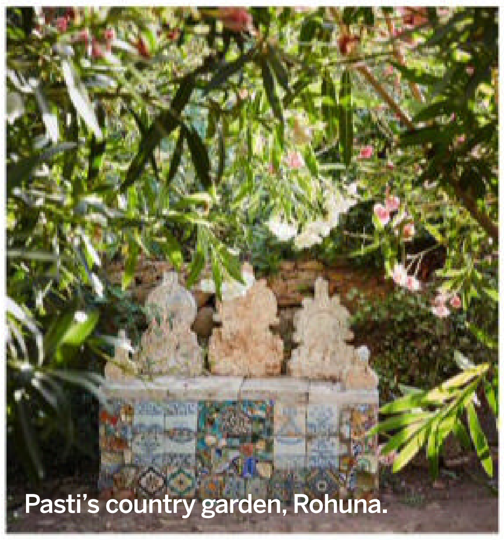
Several hotels in the Kasbah offer sunny roof gardens for the light-starved, such as. **La Tangerina** and **Aux 3 Portes**. For sunset drinks, head to the terrace at **Hotel Nord Pinus**. They all overlook the Strait of Gibraltar, where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic. Ten minutes away, 1920s **Café Hafa** is arranged on descending terraces for maximal views. Further west, **Donabo** is a new botanic garden on the Old Mountain, conceived by people who care about teaching as well as aesthetics. And, says an admirer, it has "the best views of Spain".

Tourists and travellers

Gape at your peril; make a plan for navigating the old medina with an air of determination. Antiques and bagatelles are gathered over several floors at **Boutique Majid** as well as **Galerie Tindouf** (spilling over into a diffusion line next door, **Bazar Tindouf**). **De Velasco** has 'the best kaftans in town', with further wearable treasures at **Boutique Volubilis**. For quality Berber rugs, head to **Bleu de Fes**, and for all things woven, seek out **Fondouk Chejra**, a weaver's market next door to **Hotel Minzah**, where the artisans also do their weaving.

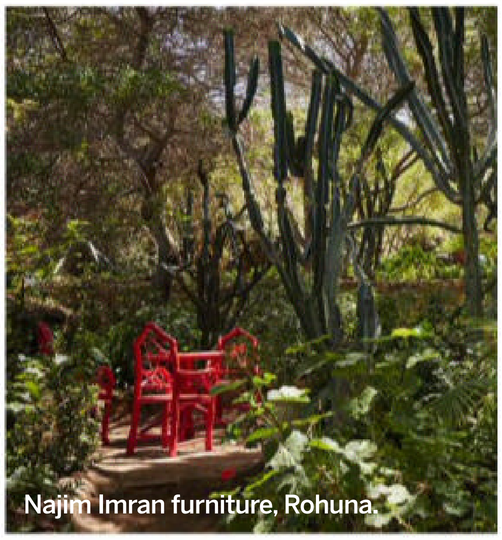
And breathe

Lunch and a salon de thé are among the offerings of **Las Chicas**, which specialises in handmade Moroccan artefacts. After deliberating over the textiles at **Galerie Laure Welfling** there are two options for unwinding: the garden at **Musée de la Kasbah**, or lunch at **Le Salon Bleu** (whose French owners run Kasbah guest house **Dar Nour**). **Villa Mimi Calpe** is a small, centrally located hotel with an enclosed garden and swimming pool. Further out, **Casa d'Italia** is a spacious restaurant in a former palace with the feel of an old club.


Pasti's country garden, Rohuna.

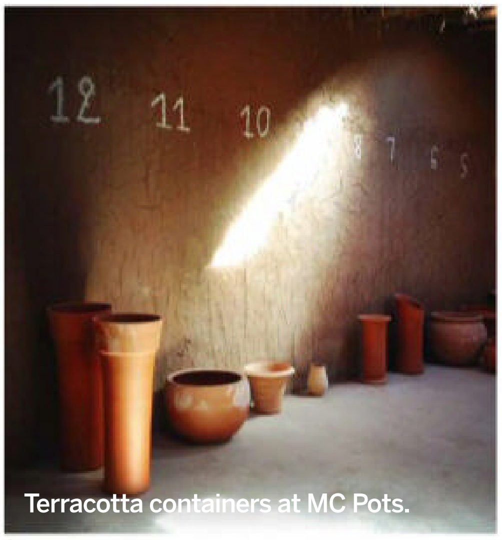
Earthly paradise

Eden Revisited: A Garden in Northern Morocco by Umberto Pasti is an illuminating book that every visiting dreamer must read. Ngoc Minh Ngo's glittering photographs of **Pasti's country garden** at **Rohuna** (40 miles south of Tangier) are as persuasive as the text. Make the pilgrimage, having arranged ahead (there is a visiting fee, which can include lunch – email umbertopasti@gmail.com). Pasti's garden is made up of smaller gardens, named after the people who tend them. Take home a memory from this utopia of conservation and reinvention, with a wire tree made by Pasti's celebrated cook Soufiane Lezaar, or traditionally woven 'straw circus' figures, made by locals. Najim Imran is another protégé, a furniture maker whose gnarled seats and divans loosely follow the picturesque tradition, fashioned from strawberry tree wood and painted in gloss. See now-ontheocean.com


Najim Imran furniture, Rohuna.

Heavenly clay

Further down the coast, where small pépinières (nurseries) are strung out along the highway, seek out the lush **Jardins Exotiques de Bouknadel**, supported by the King's Foundation for the Protection of the Environment. If heading towards Marrakech (about 350 miles from Tangier), stop at the **MC Pots** workshop, run by garden designer Madison Cox. Having bought the old terracotta factory on the outskirts of town, the President of the Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent Foundation (which operates **Le Jardin Majorelle** in Marrakech) retained the skilled workers of this ancient industry. Being a 'small, tight organisation of a few master potters', there is no commercial outlet outside of Morocco.


Terracotta containers at MC Pots.

Souvenirs

Best lunch on the beach L'Océan, plage Sidi Kacem; Côté Sud, plage Bakacem

Best drinks and dinner El Morocco Club, Kasbah

Best tea with a view Café Hafa, Marshan

Best pick-me-up Le Salon Bleu, Kasbah

Best browse Galerie Laure Welfling, Kasbah

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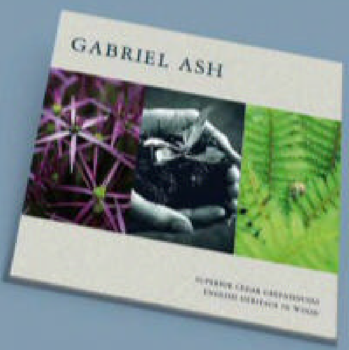

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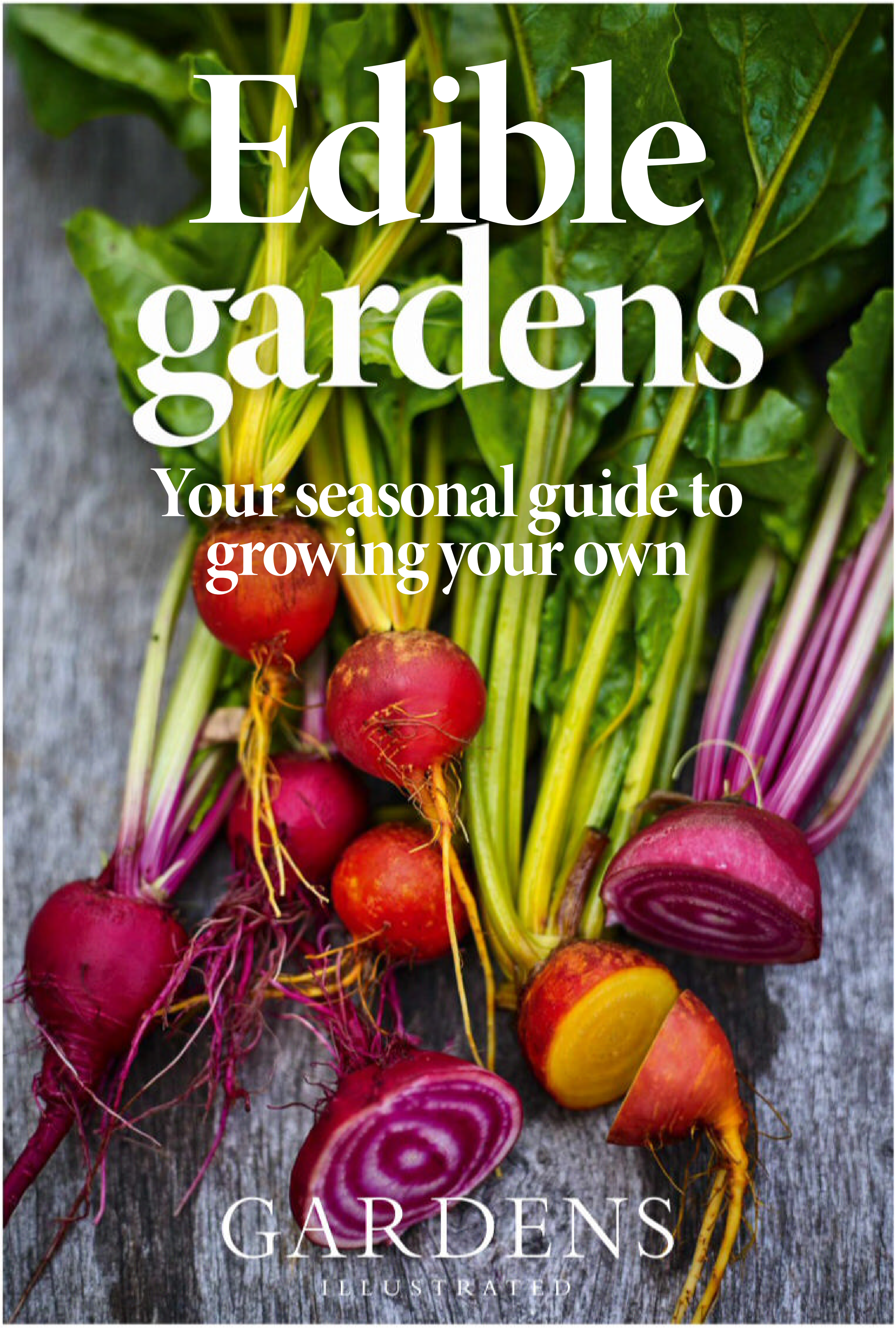

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Editor's letter

In this small taster from the *Gardens Illustrated* special edition *A Year in the Edible Garden*, gardener cook Jojo Tulloh offers a flavour of the many joys an edible garden can bring. Packed with suggestions of what to sow when, and delicious recipes that make imaginative use of seasonal fruit, vegetables and fresh herbs, Jojo's month-by-month guide is sure to inspire both seasoned growers and those new to edible gardening alike. And if it whets your appetite for growing your own, we've also included a guide to sowing seeds and a selection of the best seed suppliers hand-picked by the *Gardens Illustrated* team.

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

Contents

4 **Spring** Get busy sowing vibrant, windowsill chillies, planting out potatoes, and sowing salads and fast-growing radishes outdoors

10 **Summer** Enjoy the bounty of the ripening kitchen garden, with an eye on weeding, watering and successional sowing

16 **Autumn** Pick ripe apples, spread compost on empty beds and store root vegetables

22 **Winter** As well as taking stock of the year and planning for the next season, it's time to prune fruit trees and plant overwintering garlic

28 **Tips for sowing seeds** Learn techniques for successful germination

30 **Seed suppliers** Our selection of the best edible seed suppliers

COVER AND EDITOR'S LETTER IMAGES / JASON INGRAM

SPRING

While waiting for the soil to warm up, Jojo gets busy growing windowsill chillies for a splash of colour. Resist the temptation to plant out seedlings too early, and instead sow hardy salads, radish and seed potatoes

ALL WORDS **JOJO TULLOH**
ALL ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

CLUSTER BEANS

March

In the garden

Some years ago a friend brought me several packets of vegetable seeds from India: *pusa navbahar* (cluster beans), *brinjal* (aubergine), *dudhi* (bottle gourds), *palak* (spinach), *pusa sawani* (okra), chilli and mooli (white radish). They were beautifully packaged, the plant names spelled out in old-fashioned typefaces and illustrated with drawings of vegetables. Too beautiful to use, they sit on my desk, now long out of date, but the idea of an Indian allotment stayed with me.

First came the idea of a windowsill packed with bright-red, orange, yellow and purple chilli peppers. Then came the discovery of fresh turmeric, a buff-coloured rhizome that looks like a grub, but is a deep-orange colour under the skin. Grate the fibrous root and pour over a little boiling water and you have a bowl full of fragrant, orange liquid with an oily sheen. The taste is earthy with a citrus tang. You can use it in place of dried turmeric or drink it as a tea (but not if you are pregnant or have diabetes). Think of how much stronger and tastier fresh ginger is than dried and you'll get an idea of how to use it. But watch out, as it stains fingers and surfaces yellow; it dyed my pumpkin soup a rich, egg-yolk orange and makes a fine-coloured kedgeree (smoked haddock, egg, spices and rice).

Flavour aside, the rhizome is believed to have powerful health benefits with anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory properties. It's not hard to grow and you can also use the leaves to flavour curries and stews. Take a fresh rhizome and pop it under 5cm of potting compost and you should see growth fairly quickly. Keep moist and feed every two weeks.

In the kitchen

There is something peculiarly satisfying about pulling and then eating weeds. It's the ultimate in synchronicity for the gardener cook. Not only do wild greens provide an iron-rich ingredient at a time when few greens are available but harvesting the first nettles and dandelions means you have your eyes to the ground. Knowing when the earth has begun to warm up again is vitally important for successful planting. I am a fairly conservative forager, sticking to common plants I can be sure of identifying. Nettles and dandelions are two of my favourites. I like to blanch my dandelions (excluding the light to make the leaves less green and bitter) by letting them grow under a flowerpot for a week; then I eat them boiled and dressed with lemon juice and olive oil. Take 450g of dandelion greens and plunge them into a big pot of salted water for about five minutes, drain and spread them on to a tea towel to dry, then squeeze them gently to get rid of some, but not all, of the water (leaving a little helps dilute the lemon juice). In a bowl, dress

BRINJAL
CHILLI
RADISH

the greens with the juice of one lemon and about two tablespoons of olive oil. If you fancy a change, try sautéing blanched dandelions with olive oil, chilli pepper and garlic.

With nettles, I pick only the very tender tops, blanch them in salted water, then press them dry between two tea towels. I use nettles as a spinach substitute with feta and pine nuts on a tomato-less pizza, in *börek* (filo triangles) or added to lemon risotto with some crème fraîche and parmesan.

If you have overwintered mustard leaves on your plot, pick a bunch of bitter leaves and cook them with green lentils for a restorative lunch. Take one bunch of leaves – around 500g for four people – remove the stems, then wash them and wilt them in the water that still clings to their leaves, drain and chop coarsely. Peel and finely chop an onion, a celery stalk, a small fennel bulb and a carrot. Heat four tablespoons of olive oil and fry the vegetables with two garlic cloves, peeled and smashed. Cover the pan and sweat over a medium heat until the vegetables are soft, then stir in one heaped teaspoonful each of chopped fresh oregano and rosemary. Add 450g of small green lentils and a litre of water, bring to the boil and simmer until the lentils are soft, then season. Briefly sauté the wilted greens in olive oil and add to the lentils. Add the juice of half a lemon and serve with sourdough toast, rubbed with olive oil and garlic.

What to sow

- **Chillies are ideal for pot gardeners** Try 'Sparkler', with its pointed, vivid-red fruits, from Sea Spring Seeds. Real Seeds has the triangular 'Pyramid' chilli, which starts out purple and ripens into an array of pinks, oranges and reds. Chillies need heat to get started so start in an airing cupboard if you don't have a heated propagator. See page 31 for suppliers.
- **Two cultivars that ripen early** are 'Latah' and 'Stupice'. Both have a high tolerance for short summers and are perfect for greenhouse-less gardeners. Out on the plot, plant potatoes in trenches lined with well-rotted compost, and sow radishes, rocket, onions, mustard greens and corn salad.

What to cook

- **Amsoi greens fried in spiced oil** Chiltern Seeds (see page 31) sells seeds of peppery amsoi green or Indian mustard greens; add it to dals or use it to make this dish of wilted greens: **500g amsoi greens, 1tbsp mustard oil, ½tsp whole black mustard seeds, 1 dried chilli, 1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed, salt to season.** De-stem the greens and rinse well. Heat the mustard oil in a pan and when it's hot add the black mustard seeds. Once the seeds start popping add the dried chilli and fry until it darkens. Add the garlic and, almost instantly, add the leaves. Using tongs, turn the leaves quickly until they wilt and cook until the water evaporates. Season with salt.

With their flash of green, red and white, radishes are the beauty queens of the vegetable kingdom. If sown successionally, all parts of the radish – the leaf, root and seedpod – can be enjoyed in a salad at the same time

April

In the garden

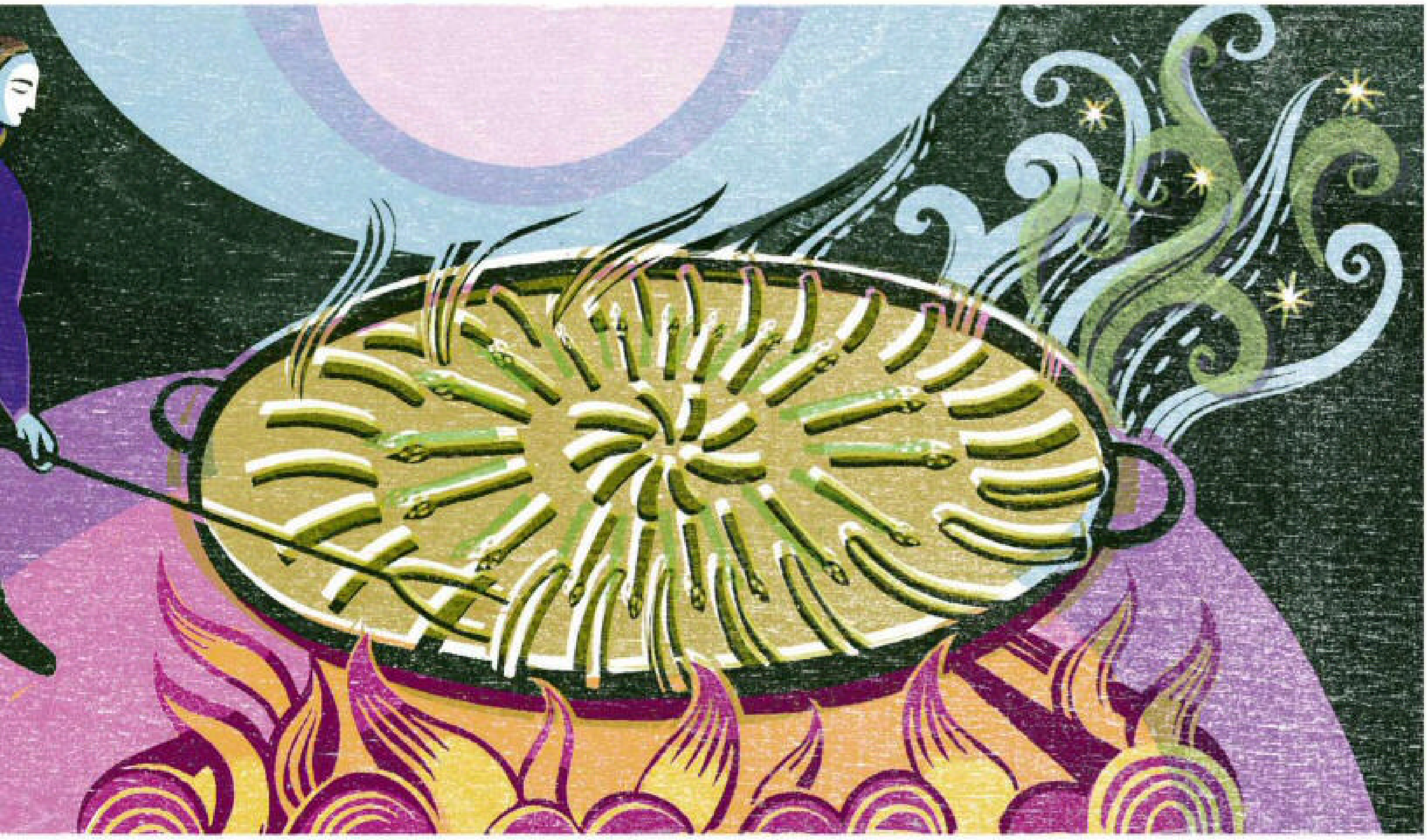
April is a terrible month for impatient gardeners. With windowsills bristling with potted-up seedlings, the temptation to plant them out can be overpowering (and disastrous). If you really want to get your hands dirty, why not plant radishes? With their flash of green, red and white, radishes are the beauty queens of the vegetable kingdom. They are also among the fastest growing of all vegetables, offering (almost) instant gratification. If sown successionally, all parts of the radish – leaf, root and seedpod – can be enjoyed in a salad at the same time. *Raphanus sativus* 'French Breakfast' is one of my favourites, a classic, oval-shaped radish, magenta on top with a crisp, white tip and a mild, nutty flavour. Others include 'Cherry Belle', a bright, cherry-red globe cultivar, and 'Pink Beauty', a sweet, round radish with pink flesh. Chiltern Seeds (see page 31) has all of these, as well as a mixed packet of red, yellow, white and violet radishes from Italy. For those with a penchant for the unusual, try 'Rat's Tail', which is grown not for its roots but for its elongated, pencil-thick, edible pods, which are good raw in salads, tossed into a stir fry or pickled. Before the pods form, the single-petal, pink-tinged flowers will lure beneficial pollinators to your plot.

Radishes should be sown in drills 1cm deep at a spacing of 2-4cm. They need to be kept well watered and should germinate after two to three days. Thin any clustered seedlings to 2-4cm. Sow side by side with slow-germinating parsnips, which are often forgotten and accidentally dug up. A row of radishes makes for a good reminder. Because they grow fast, radishes can be inter-planted with overwintered garlic or onions, or sown around fruit bushes, such as gooseberries or currants.

For another 'instant' spring crop, sow a row of mixed salads. Try a mix of reds and greens, such as the Italian Misticanza mix (radicchio, endive, orache, mizuna, kale, mustard and corn salad) or the Provençal Mesclun mix (loose-leaved salads, such as chicory, rocket and watercress).

In the kitchen

In spring you can make good use of the tips, leaves and shoots of plants that will crop later on, either as salad ingredients or in soups and tarts. Peas, broad beans, asparagus and herbs are at their best when eaten as soon as possible after picking. One of my favourite spring flavours is green garlic. I sow my garlic fairly close together so I can lift some of it early, when the whole bulb and leaf can be used, and still have a decent crop later on. Peel, chop and sauté the bulbs and leaves (usually six, when they look like spring onions, or four, when they resemble slim leeks, are enough to serve four people) and add them to simple soups with potato, or to a quiche with leeks and nettles, or fold them through



focaccia dough. Dolmades rolled using tender, spring vine leaves can be made with rice, green garlic, raisins and pine nuts. Later on I use green garlic with the first, very small, artichokes in a sloppy soup of peas with a poached egg on top.

Pea tendrils, onion tops and the leafy tips of broad beans can be eaten in a salad of tiny new potatoes and brown shrimps, or stirred into a green risotto at the last moment. Blackcurrant leaves can be used to infuse custards for ice cream.

Asparagus comes into season at the end of this month. Eat the first few spears simply with lemon and butter. As they get a bigger, you can grill them and use them in a variety of ways. First, bend the stems; they should snap low down where they become woody (reserve the bottoms to flavour a stock for soups). Blanch them in salted, boiling water for one minute, then spread out to cool on a tea towel. Rub with olive oil and grill over charcoal (or on a griddle) for about six minutes, turning frequently. Serve with a dressing of sea salt, lemon and olive oil, and a few shavings of parmesan, or with sieved hard-boiled eggs, capers and radishes. Or try a vinaigrette made with freshly squeezed orange juice, vinegar and olive oil. Another favourite dish is paella with razor clams and spears of asparagus, fanned out like the spokes of a wheel. Or I may make a soufflé with the stalks puréed and blended, and the tips added whole to the batter.

What to sow

- **I always look for beauty and fruitfulness** when placing plants next to each other. In the past I've sown a 'flag of salad', with triangular wedges of different varieties radiating from the centre, and a patchwork of squares, sown individually with sorrel, chard, beetroot and carrots, and mixed with annual flowers. Other winning combinations include red orache, alongside striped borlotti beans intertwined with *Ipomoea lobata*, and *Dahlia* 'Collarette Dandy' underplanted with courgettes. One year, our local primary school's garden had hazel wigwams twined with blue morning glory and the bean 'A Cosse Violette'.

What to cook

- **Spring on a plate** Wash a bunch of radishes, leaving the stalks on. Place on a plate with a small pile of sea salt and a pat of unsalted butter. Push each radish into the butter, sprinkle with salt and eat. Another delicious idea is to serve new vegetables as crudités with a **hot anchovy cream**. For this you need: **2 large cloves of garlic, peeled and minced, 150ml olive oil, 150ml double cream, 2 x 50g tins anchovies.** Simmer the garlic and olive oil in a pan over a low heat until the garlic is soft. Add the anchovies and cook on the same heat until they have melted into the oil. Add the cream and cook slowly until you have a velvety, salty emulsion (up to 30 minutes). Serve in a warmed bowl with vegetables around it.

Cooking with flowers is an obvious choice in May. Scatter a handful of red and orange nasturtium flowers or bright, star-shaped borage flowers over your salad for peppery spice, cucumber notes and plenty of colour

May

In the garden

May is the month in which I long for a gardening third eye. A paragon of focused efficiency, I would earth up my potatoes, stay on top of weeds, thin out newly germinated salad, and sow spinach, beetroot, carrot, radishes and turnips successionally at regular two-week intervals. I would prune my damson and greengage trees, watch out for slugs, snails and aphid infestation, and continue to tend to my seedlings on the windowsills at home. I would pot on tomatoes and peppers and give newly planted fruit trees a thorough drenching once a week.

The best way to approach this most hectic of months is to remind yourself that gardening is meant to be relaxing. Pace yourself – the growing season is a long-distance event, not a sprint.

Having had decent but not marvellous pumpkin crops in the past – plants have been decimated by snails and slugs, or have only one or two small fruits – I have a new system. To provide plenty of food for this greedy crop, I dig several bucket-sized holes, half-fill them with well-rotted muck and fill the top in with soil. When the threat of late frosts has passed, I bring my hardened-off plants to the plot and plant them on top of the muck with a frame of bamboo or strong wire hoops over the top. Then I take a clear polythene carrier bag and fit this over the frame, securing the bottom with an elastic band to make a mini cloche that will provide heat as well as protection from slugs. If you're sowing seeds direct, plant them edgeways and 5cm deep, roughly 1.5m apart. When a male flower has formed on each shoot, cut it short after a female flower (with a round, mini pumpkin attached) has formed behind it. This way more fruits will form behind. 'Crown Prince', 'Uchiki Kuri' and 'Hokkaido' are three flavoursome cultivars.

In the kitchen

Cooking with flowers is an obvious choice in May when gardens are magnificently in bloom. Scattering a handful of red and orange nasturtium flowers or bright, star-shaped borage flowers over your salad adds peppery spice, cucumber notes and plenty of colour. For something different, try growing hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*). Its tiny, intense-blue flowers are beloved of bees, and combined with a salad of mixed leaves and chopped boiled eggs the blooms make a memorable lunch. The flavour is quite strong so go easy.

The petals of pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) were once used to colour butter and cheese yellow. Add them to salads, as well as rice, egg and seafood dishes where their subtle flavour can be appreciated without being overwhelmed.

For a new take on an old favourite, try a lemon and marigold drizzle cake. Add three tablespoons of marigold petals to the sponge mixture (three eggs,

150g butter, 175g caster sugar, zest of one lemon, 200g self-raising flour, one teaspoon baking powder, 75ml milk) and bake in a lined loaf tin. Finish with a crunchy, crystal topping. After baking make eight small holes in the top, add a handful of petals to a mixture of two tablespoons each of caster and icing sugar and the juice of one lemon, then drizzle over the cake before popping back in the oven for five minutes until crystals form.

Early in the season, small, green gooseberries are at their best for pies, jams and jellies. If you're feeling ambitious, you could try making a pie with a raised hot-water or pork-pie crust (but sweetened rather than seasoned). This Nottinghamshire speciality was traditionally filled with green gooseberries instead of meat. After baking, melted apple jelly was poured in through a slit in the lid and the pie served cold with a firm set jelly. Jane Grigson has an extensive recipe in her book *Good Things*. A less labour-intensive approach (suited to riper, sweeter gooseberries) is to take 200g of sweet pastry and line a 20cm tart tin. Bake it blind with pastry beans, then arrange 300g of topped and tailed gooseberries in the shell and pour over a custard made from two egg yolks, 50g caster sugar and 250ml single cream whisked together. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature with whipped cream sweetened with a tablespoon of icing sugar.

What to sow

- **Salad is an easy, rewarding crop to grow.** There is a huge selection of cultivars, and the leaves have more flavour and nutritional value if eaten freshly picked. The Cos lettuce 'Little Leprechaun' (from the Seed Co-operative) has crisp, red leaves, while Chiltern Seeds offers the Cos Romaine lettuce 'Forellenschluss', an Austrian heirloom cultivar with red freckles, and the fast-growing Italian oak leaf lettuce 'Catalogna'. For a good selection, try a mixture such as Tuscan Salad Mix from Franchi Seeds.
- **If you are plagued by slugs,** try growing the kind of peppery leaves they find less palatable, such as rocket, mizuna, mibuna, komatsuna and mustard 'Red Giant', all from Chiltern Seeds. See page 31 for suppliers.

What to cook

- **Try bitter leaves, such as endives and chicory,** with this **citrus dressing**: whisk together **½tsp minced orange zest**, **2tbsp freshly squeezed orange juice, 1tbsp white wine vinegar** and a **good pinch of salt** before adding **3tbsp olive oil** (not too fruity).
- **Fennel pollen and elderflowers** Collect fennel pollen from wild or garden plants, store in a jam jar and sprinkle over roast or braised pork for an intensely aromatic flavour combination, or add pollen to pastry for savoury tarts or parmesan cheese biscuits. Look out for elderflowers to use in jellies and cordials and to flavour syrup for poached peaches.

SUMMER

As spring turns to summer, Jojo makes the most of warmer days with regular visits to her allotment, but finds much of her time is spent juggling the competing demands of kitchen and garden

June

In the garden

June gardening is the height of pleasure. Nothing makes me happier than setting out for my plot with a shallow basket packed with well-grown courgettes, beans, tomatoes and squash plants ready to set out.

I have some idea where they'll go, but the act of putting them in is always a spur to creativity. I love the combination of egg-yolk yellow courgette flowers with vivid, jewel-coloured dahlias. Step-over apples underplanted with strawberries and marigolds made a pattern worthy of William Morris. In another bed, two-tone violet and white turnips (Rapa Tonda a Colletto Viola from Franchi Seeds – see page 31), 'Boltardy' beetroot and Swiss Chard 'Fordhook Giant', with its glossy, crumpled, dark-green leaves, compete for the most luxuriant foliage. A bed cleared of early potatoes is sown with a salad mixture – Misticanza di Lattughe, also from Franchi Seeds – which includes a selection of meltingly soft butterhead lettuces.

On my journey to the allotment the banks are thick with comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*). Recognisable by its hairy, shield-shaped leaves and hooded, purple flowers, comfrey is a wonderful compost plant. Its leaves are rich in potash, nitrogen and phosphate, and work as a compost activator: use them to line a potato trench or later on as a mulch between potato plants. You can pack the foliage down into a barrel with a weight on top to make a fantastic tomato feed, or mix the leaves with leaf mould to make a base for potting compost. You can even eat the leaves dipped in batter. You can use the wild form as compost, but the most useful as a fertiliser is 'Bocking 14', a cultivar of Russian comfrey *Symphytum* x *uplandicum*. It should be a must on any vegetable garden. You can buy a pack of five root cuttings from organiccatalogue.com. Likewise, if you have an overgrown area thick with nettles, scythe them down and add to a barrel of water to make a similarly nutrient-rich liquid feed.

In the kitchen

The June garden offers many delights for gourmets. Baby artichokes, eaten raw when very young, need nothing more than good extra virgin olive oil and salt. Allow two fresh, baby artichokes per person. Cut a fresh end on each artichoke stem (8cm or so long) and lay them on a platter; no need to cook. Give each guest a small bowl filled with olive oil sprinkled liberally with sea salt. Peel away the tough, outer leaves until you get to the pale-lemon leaves tipped with pink. Dip each leaf into the oil at its base. Cut the heart in two and dip into the seasoned oil; this young there is no hairy choke.

I look forward with great anticipation to the first early potatoes, with their translucent, papery skins. Boil them simply, or cook in a packet. To do this, scrape, dot with cubes of butter (15g for every six

potatoes), add salt and a few sprigs of thyme, and wrap up in baking parchment with the ends folded over several times. Cook at 220°C for 45 minutes.

Walnuts, should you have a tree, can be chopped with capers and shallots to dress an onglet steak, added to a beef stew or eaten with bread and cheese. Brine them while they are still soft and green (cut one in half or stick a pin into one to see if the hard, inner skin has formed). Take 1kg of green walnuts, prick all over with a pin, cover with water and stir in 120g sea salt. Cover and leave for a week before draining and repeating with fresh brine. Drain the walnuts and lay on a tray; in a few days they will be black. Put 500ml malt vinegar, 250g brown sugar, half a teaspoon of allspice, half a teaspoon of cloves, six black peppercorns and one tablespoon of freshly grated root ginger in a pan and bring to the boil, then add the walnuts and simmer for 15 minutes. Decant into preserving jars, washed in soapy water and heated in a warm oven (160°C) for ten minutes to sterilise, and store somewhere cool and dark.

Now is the season for effortless lunches of mixed garden salads made pretty with borage and hyssop flowers, eaten with soft, raw-milk cheeses, such as St Jude, a cow's milk cheese from Suffolk, Tymsboro and Sleightlett, both made with goat's milk in Somerset, or Bartlett, a ewe's milk cheese also from Somerset. For an Italian take, arrange a pile of shelled walnuts alongside wild rocket and ricotta.

What to sow

- **Plant chicory and endive** then protect plants over the winter to give you greens until Christmas. Try 'Encornet de Bordeaux', an old French endive cultivar from Chiltern Seeds. Tie the leaves together so the heart stays white and sweet, or pop a flowerpot over the plant, covering the drainage hole. Chicory 'Catalogna Frastagliata' from Franchi Seeds has a white rib and serrated leaf. See page 31 for suppliers.
- **Keep on top of watering and weeding.** Water seedlings little and often, and larger plants heavily once a week, so roots form further down where there is more nourishment. Dig annual weeds into the soil before they seed so they can release their nutrients.

What to cook

- **Strawberry jam** Take **1kg strawberries**, small and sweet, and a **handful of wild strawberries** (*Fragaria moschata*, from Europe, which can be grown from seed), and wash them briefly before you hull. Toss in **750g sugar** and **3tbsp lemon juice**. Leave to macerate until the sugar has dissolved (about 2 hours). Cook over a low heat and allow the mixture to slowly break down into a thick crimson syrup. Increase the heat and boil hard for 5 minutes, then take off the heat and do the wrinkle test (put a drop of jam on a cold saucer and push it to see if it wrinkles). Boil again briefly if not set, skim off any scum, decant into clean jars and keep in the fridge.

Currants are a real asset in any kitchen garden. They are heavy croppers, require little maintenance and can be expensive to buy in any quantity. More importantly, their flavour in jellies, tarts, jams and cordials is superb

July

In the garden

For me, a vegetable garden in July is like a river in full spate, the growth of weeds and crops equally relentless. Courgettes and cucumbers never seem to stop coming, the dahlias, sunflowers and cosmos need picking or deadheading and pumpkins need feeding. Every corner of the plot seems to scream for attention, and that's even before you begin the process of turning produce into plenty. Your ability to stay afloat depends on how much work you have put in during the previous months.

I have wasted many hot, summer hours hacking down overgrown paths and watering parched, under-mulched earth. I now put aside regular days in winter for laying down paths underlaid with weed-resistant fabric and covered in woodchip. To help lock moisture into the soil, I spend mornings barrowing down manure to spread over bare earth. This preparation leaves me time to prepare a bed for winter salads – sown now, it will see me through to spring (if planted any earlier many of these crops would have been plagued by flea beetles).

My mantra in July is hoe, weed, stake. Regular short visits to the allotment are the ideal I strive for. Running a hoe along rows of beetroot and turnip is far more effective if done frequently. Despite my best intentions, one thing I never seem to do in time is stake my tomatoes. My friend's method of growing two-metre-plus 'Alicante' tomato plants up a string suspended from a horizontal pole is a sensible way to go. I've also seen straggling tomato plants laid over upturned plastic vegetable crates – an unsightly but effective method of keeping the fruits off the ground. If you are growing tomatoes in pots, water them regularly to prevent blossom end rot (dark, sunken patches on the fruit).

In the kitchen

The currant is a real asset in any kitchen garden. They are heavy croppers, require low maintenance and the berries can be expensive to buy in any quantity. Most importantly, the flavour of jellies, tarts, jams, cordials and puddings made with currants is superb. I have four plants: two red and two black. They ripen over about a month and I usually throw a bit of black netting around the bushes to keep off the birds.

As the season is quite short, I freeze lots. I use some to make the Swedish dish, *rårörda röda vinbär* (raw moved, or stirred, redcurrants). It's an uncooked dish, very simple to prepare, requiring only sugar and a little preparation time. Take 200g of redcurrants washed and picked clean of the stalks. Add 85g of sugar and stir. Leave for three or four hours until the sugar has dissolved, stirring once or twice. Decant into a clip-top jar and store in the fridge (use within a week). You can use it in cakes, on crêpes or muesli, or to accompany meat.

Eliza Acton (1799-1859) was our first truly modern cookery writer. Her book *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (published in 1845) was the first aimed at the inexperienced cook, and her inclusion of accurate quantities and cooking times was innovative. Hugely influential in its time, it still holds appeal, thanks to Acton's clear prose and concise instructions. My favourite is the chapter on preserves, packed with delights such as rhubarb, green gooseberry and greengage jams. The recipes are clearly the result of experience, evidenced by Acton's pertinent 'observations'. She notes some readers found her redcurrant jelly 'scarcely firm enough for the table', but don't be put off – it has far more flavour than commercially produced jellies.

Here is her Superlative Red Currant Jelly recipe. 'Strip carefully from the stems some quite ripe currants of the finest quality, and mix with an equal weight of good sugar reduced to powder; boil these together quickly for exactly eight minutes, keep them stirred all the time, and clear off the scum – which will be very abundant – as it rises; then turn the preserve into a very clean sieve, and put into small jars the jelly which runs through it, and which will be delicious in flavour, and of the brightest colour. It should be carried immediately, when this is practicable, to an extremely cool but not a damp place, and left there until perfectly cold. Currants 3lbs, sugar 3lbs, 8 minutes.'

What to sow

- **Don't forget about successional sowing.** There's still time to sow extra rows of beetroot, turnips, spinach, salad onions and fast-growing carrots.
- **Harvest garlic and main crop onions.** I lay mine out on upturned apple crates to dry out. I rub the papery skins off the garlic, trim their roots, and tie them as skilfully as I can. The singular taste of fresh, green onions is a treat in sandwiches with cheese.
- **Looking forward to winter, my salad bed** includes rows of radicchio 'Rossa di Treviso' planted in late June and the soft buttery leaves of mâche or lamb's lettuce, the succulent leaves of miner's lettuce, rows of mizuna and mibuna and the mustard 'Green in Snow'. This, along with self-seeding rocket, should provide me with many months of vivid-green, peppery salad leaves.

What to cook

- **Baked courgette flowers** Allow **3 flowers each** for four people. Take **300g soft cheese (eg ricotta)**, drain off any watery liquid, and mix with **3tbsp finely grated parmesan**, the **zest of 1 lemon**, finely grated, **1tbsp olive oil**, **salt and pepper** and **6-8 basil leaves** (ideally lemon basil), chopped. Remove the stamens from the flowers, spoon in the filling, and twist the ends of the flower together to hold it in place. Preheat oven to 180°C, arrange the flowers on a baking tray, zigzagged with a little more oil, and bake for 6-8 minutes until the filling is warm and the flowers are still soft, not crisp.

My summer vegetable tableaux might include a pile of tightly closed artichoke heads, their green armour-plating giving no hint of the tender flesh inside, or the pale-green bend of a trombone courgette

August

In the garden

In the month when sultry days slow the pace of life, it's time to make the case for the vegetable garden as a place to revel in beauty. There is a newly minted quality to freshly picked fruit and vegetables that makes them objects worthy of admiration quite apart from their culinary qualities.

From Chardin's strawberries to Fantin-Latour's nasturtiums, painters have delighted in the exquisite shapes and subtle colours revealed in nature. Set aside time for contemplation and stroll round your plot with a painter's eye, pausing to observe the hoverfly as it skims past, or a drop of water as it rolls off a rhubarb leaf. Consider which combinations are most pleasing and make a note of them.

I have a small pergola jutting off my shed where I shelter from the sun. In high summer it is engulfed in vine leaves. I put my deckchair under this tent of green and bask in the filtered green light. When I can stir myself, I gather a basket of yellow squash, cucumbers and assorted flowers and head home to gloat over my crops. I may never get around to painting them but I love arranging little vegetable tableaux. It might be a pile of tightly closed artichoke heads, their green armour-plating giving no hint of the tender flesh inside, or the pale-green bend of the trombone courgette among mounds of red and green striped tomatoes, with bulbs of garlic whose white, tissue paper-covered heads reveal cloves that are streaked pink and purple. Up on the counter pyramids of speckled pink and green borlotti pods sit in front of a vase filled with bright splashes of yellow sunflowers, white and deep pink cosmos, and the sky-blue stars of borage blossom.

In the kitchen

August cooking puts one in a slight predicament: produce is at its most plentiful but you may not feel like cooking. One way around this is either to put dishes together rapidly just before eating or bake them long and slow in the cool of the day and eat much later at room temperature. A few baby courgettes sliced and cooked with lemon and butter and garnished with chives make a good open sandwich with goat's cheese. Try a slice of superior feta alongside basil and garden tomatoes zigzagged with extra virgin olive oil, or finely chopped summer savory added to sliced tomatoes and new-season onions, cut into paper-thin slices, drizzled with olive oil and sherry vinegar. Ring the changes with salad by using mustard leaves dressed with a sesame and soy vinaigrette and garnished with spring onions and calendula petals. Whisk together one teaspoon of soy sauce, two teaspoons of rice vinegar, two tablespoons of sesame oil and 80ml of light olive oil with a pinch of sugar.

Fresh tomatoes still warm from the sun are a glorious thing but so are the dried variety. I long

for a Mediterranean sun to dry our summer glut of tomatoes on trays on the roof, but this recipe approximates that concentrated taste. These slow-roasted tomatoes can be added to green salads with roast chicken leftovers and garlic croutons, or eaten on top of very thin toast brushed with olive oil and baked in the oven until golden and brittle. Halve your tomatoes and scoop out the seeds, lay them cut side up on a baking tray, oil them a little and season with salt, pepper, a scrap of sugar and either dried oregano or some crumbled dried chilli peppers. Roast at 140°C for up to three hours (checking after two). When cool, cover with olive oil and keep in the fridge for up to a week.

One way of adding interest to vegetable dishes is through the addition of spice and nut blends. The Egyptian spice and nut mix, dukkah, is traditionally eaten by first dipping flat bread in olive oil and then in the spice mix, but it is also a good way of showing off your finest raw vegetables (or using on crushed avocado on toast for breakfast). This recipe comes from Jill Norman's *Herbs & Spices* (Dorling Kindersley, 2015). Take 120g sesame seeds and 90g hazelnuts, 60g coriander seeds, 30g of cumin seeds, salt to taste. Dry roast the ingredients separately in a heavy frying pan until the sesame is golden and the hazelnuts are losing their skins. Rub the skins off the hazelnuts (in a tea towel works well), and grind everything to a fine, crushed mixture. Store in a jar.

What to sow

- **Sow a few more rows of successional veg,** such as beetroot, spinach, lettuce, turnips and radishes. Keep a close eye on courgettes, lest they swell into marrows, and deadhead flowers.
- **On small plots where long rotations are not possible** you may get potato sickness (pale leaves and stunted plants with few tubers), caused by eelworms (*Globodera rostochiensis*). One way to prevent this is to sow a green manure of mustard straight after lifting your potato crop. The mustard hardens the cysts from which the eelworms hatch.

What to cook

- **Courgette tian** Take **250g grated courgettes**, **250g potatoes** (steamed, peeled and cubed), **1tbsp each of parmesan and gruyère cheese**, **1tbsp chopped parsley** and **a few sorrel leaves**, **salt**, **pepper**, **nutmeg** and **garlic**, **5-6 eggs** and **4tbsp olive oil**. Put the cubed potatoes with a little chopped garlic, seasoning and 2tbsp of olive oil in an ovenproof dish and warm through in a low oven (150°C). Fry the courgettes gently in 2tbsp oil, crush over some salt, cover and cook for five minutes. In a large bowl beat the eggs until frothy, add herbs, cheese, salt and pepper, a little grated nutmeg and the courgettes. Stir in the potatoes and tip the whole lot into a buttered skillet or gratin dish. Transfer immediately to the oven (otherwise the egg rises up) and bake for 25 minutes at 190°C.

AUTUMN

As summer begins to fade, Jojo is busy picking ripening fruit before high winds threaten, storing root vegetables for the coming months and digging out well-rotted compost for spreading on empty beds

September

In the garden

During my years as a gardener, I've been involved in various community gardening projects, including one at a local primary school, worked by me and another mother, the children in the after-school gardening club and the school gardener, who taught the children about all things ecological. As well as raised beds, in which we grew a variety of edibles and flowers, we had a small orchard with six heritage apple trees, two plum trees, and a strip of native hedgerow plants, including medlars, hazel and rowan trees, and two blackcurrant bushes. Four chickens, hatched out at school, scratched in a run beside the trees. Plenty came in the form of an enormous, 25m-tall cooking apple tree. The problem was always how to get the apples down.

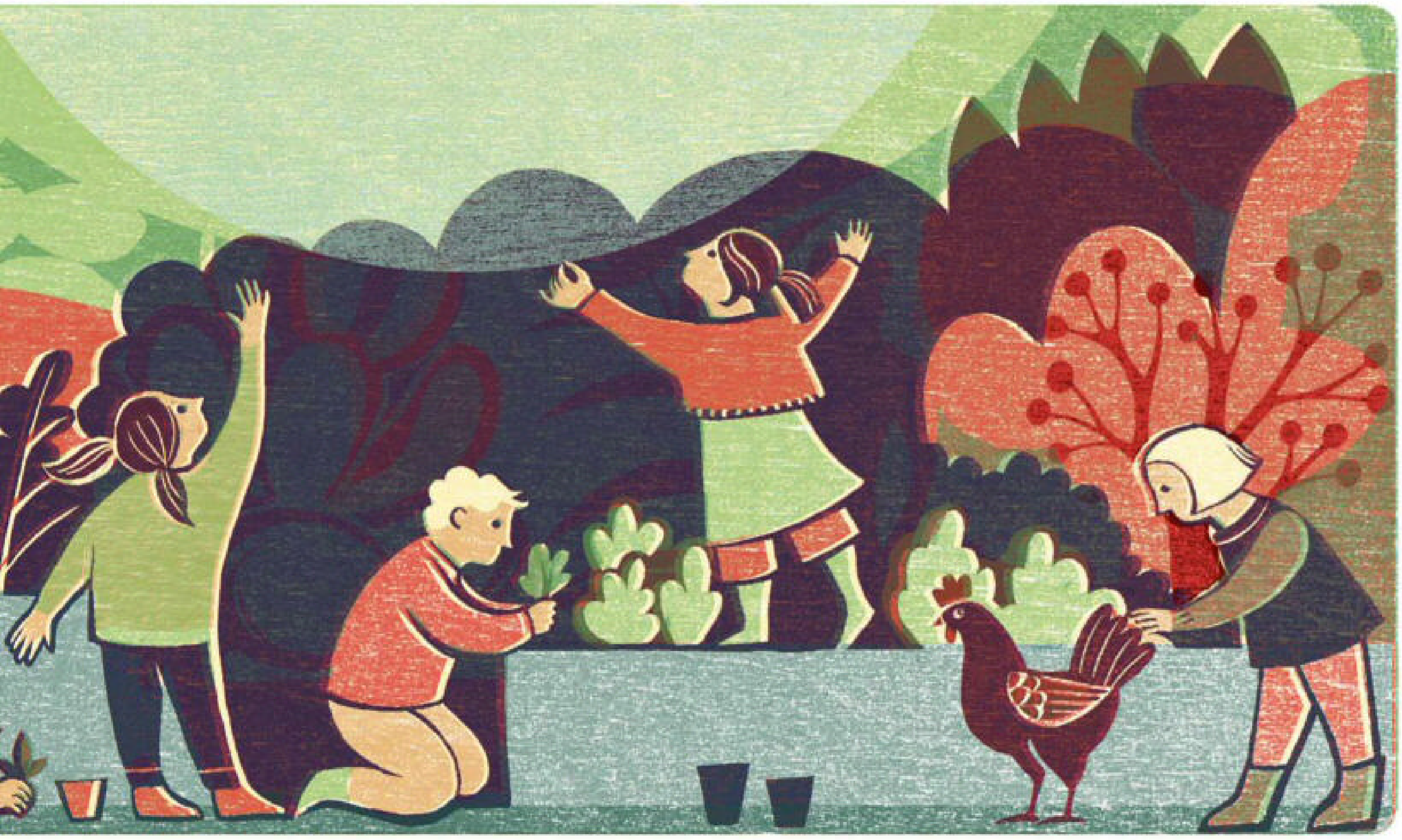
In *A New Orchard and Garden*, the Yorkshire vicar William Lawson (1553-1635) describes various useful apparatus for picking: 'A gathering apron like a poak before you, made of a purpose, or a wallet hung on a bough, or a basket with a sieve bottom, or skin bottome, with lathes or splinters under, hung in a rope to pull up and down.' I found some great modern versions in the USA (at durokon.com) – padded nylon bucket bags that strap to your back, and a net bag with a scalloped plastic edge that you attach to a telescopic handle.

Lawson's advice on picking for storing is: 'Gather your fruit when it is ripe, and not before, else will it wither, and be tough and sower. All fruits generally are ripe when they begin to fall.' Aside from looking out for unblemished fruit dropping, you can cup the apple and twist gently to see if it will disengage. Try to get them all down by the end of October when high winds and frosts threaten.

In the kitchen

'I should sugar and preserve my days like fruit,' wrote Sylvia Plath in her poem *Last Words*. It's a good motto for this time of year when hedgerow and garden plot are bursting with fruits that need to be transformed into something longer lasting. We used to grow medlars (*Mespilus germanica*) in the school orchard. It is an unusual fruit, small and round, ripening to a glossy russet colour with a central rough 'eye' framed by five sepals. The sharp jelly made from this fruit goes well with game or smoked fish. To be eaten raw, the fruit must be bletted (overripe), but the jelly requires only that you cut the fruit into four, barely cover with water and then stew until soft. Put the fruit in a jelly bag and allow to drip overnight before boiling up at the ratio of 500g sugar to 600ml juice until the setting point is reached. Seal in jars that have been washed in soapy water and then heated in a warm oven (160°C) for ten minutes to sterilise.

If you haven't grown the complex parsley- and celery-tasting herb lovage (*Levisticum officinale*),



then do sow some now (it needs cold to trigger germination). If you do have it, make a herb salt for use in soups or winter salads of smoked fish and peppery leaves, or on a Swedish *smørrebrød* (open sandwich) of brown bread, sliced boiled egg and radish. Pick a large bunch of fresh-looking leaves on a warm, dry day and blend with 200g sea salt, then push through a sieve to get rid of any fibres and freeze until required. You can also use the seeds later in a flour mix for bread.

Damsons make a good jelly as well as a terrific vodka – laid down now it will be ready for Christmas. You need 1kg damsons, 500ml of vodka, sugar to taste and a couple of large, sterilised preserving jars. Wash the damsons and remove any that are damaged. Pack them into the jars, stopping about 6cm from the top, and cover with vodka. Put in a cupboard and give the jar a shake every so often. After four months, strain the contents through a jelly bag, wringing it to extract the maximum juice. Add the sugar bit by bit, stopping when it tastes good to you. Put the jars back in the cupboard, shaking every other day for at least two weeks. It's ready when the liquid is clear and the sugar has dissolved. Strain into sterilised bottles.

If you want your alcoholic hit now, make a purée from cooked, sieved damsons sweetened with sugar, then take a teaspoon of the mixture and add to a glass of sparkling wine.

What to sow

- **If you're looking for cold-tolerant winter greens to be eaten raw or cooked,** sow a few oriental greens such as komatsuna (mustard spinach) and the mustard greens 'Osaka Purple' and 'Dragon's Tongue'.
- **The heat of the summer (plus your careful turning)** should have cooked your compost beautifully. Now is the time to dig it out and spread it over empty beds or store it in rubble sacks for use later on. This will give you plenty of space to start laying down the excess plant matter generated as you clear summer crops of potatoes, beans and pumpkins.
- **Store root vegetables** such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, beetroots and swedes. Twist off the greens and bury the roots in boxes of sand in a cool shed, cellar or garage.

What to cook

- **Classic plum and almond tart** Try this rich tart if you have lots of plums or pluots (juicy apricot/plum hybrid). It requires a shortcrust pastry shell baked blind (**225g pastry** in 20-22cm tart tin). Make a rich, stiff almond paste of **200g each of sugar, coarsely ground almonds and butter** whizzed up with **4 egg yolks**, **1tbsp lemon zest** and seeds from **half a vanilla pod**. Spoon it into the pastry case, smooth it and then arrange **16-20 plum halves**: place one in the centre cut side up and make two further rings of plums. Bake for 30-45 minutes at 190°C.

Drinking vinegars, or shrubs, once popular in colonial America, are a fashionable base for cocktails and tonics. Made from fruit steeped in sugar and vinegar, they are tart and sour and much more appetising than they sound

October

In the garden

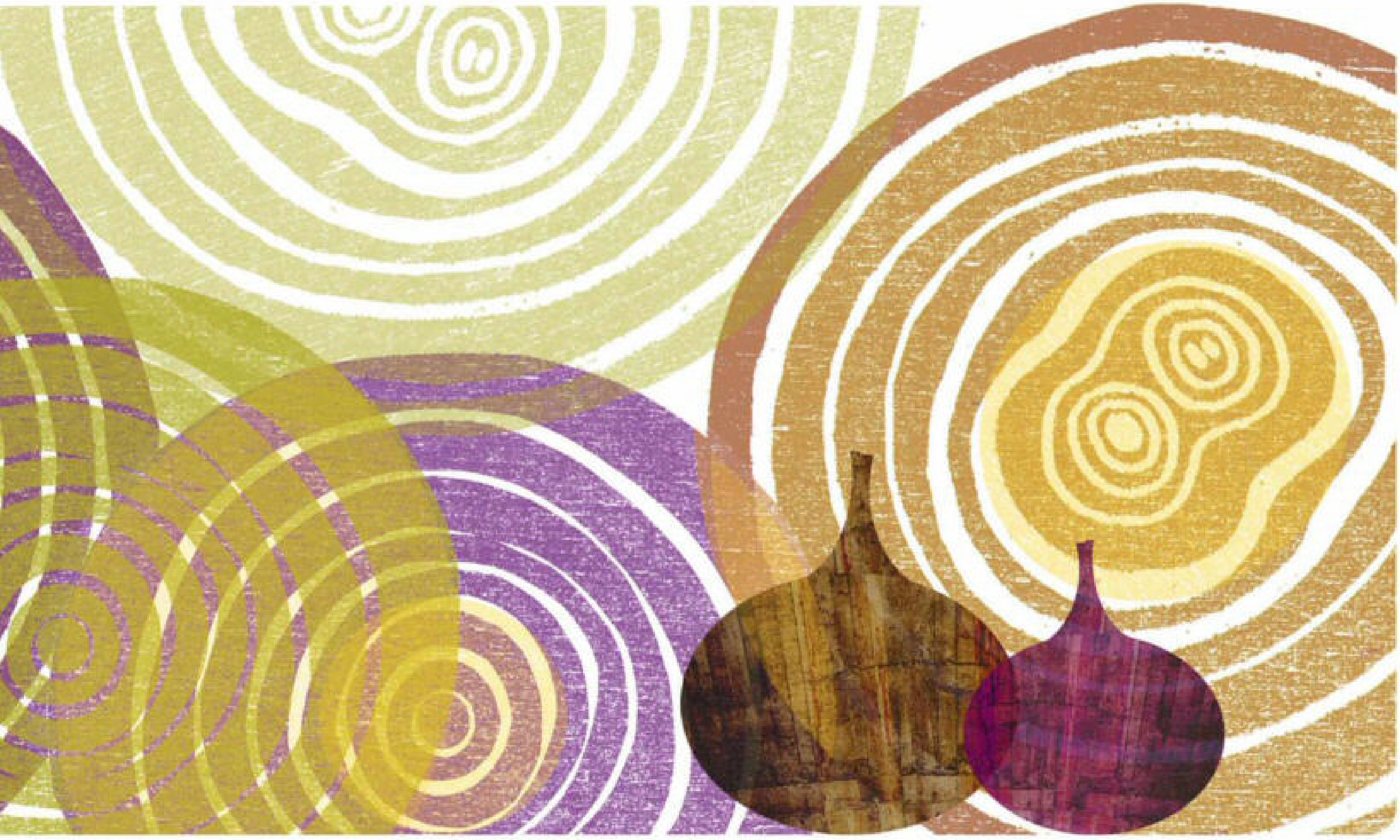
The standard supermarket onion is a harsh, rank-tasting object when compared with the subtly flavoured kinds we can grow for ourselves. Just like that other staple, the potato, the choice of onions available in seed catalogues makes what's on offer in the shops look rather pathetic. Golden, red, purple, white or green, there are onions to store, onions to eat fresh, salad onions and pickling onions.

Onions can be grown from seed or sets (immature bulbs about the size of a cherry tomato). For a year-round supply of onions from seed, sow twice, once at the end of the summer and again in the spring. It is cheaper to sow seed, there's more choice and you will grow higher-quality bulbs, but it's a more involved process. I get good results by sowing into compost in a small pot and then transplanting the seedlings. It's even easier to plant sets and you can do this right now.

Onions like an open site and well-drained, fertile soil, but should not be planted in freshly manured ground as they do not require much nitrogen, so dig over and manure your ground a few weeks in advance. Space the sets 10cm apart with 30cm between rows, pushing them into the ground gently with only the papery tip showing. If bulbs are disrupted by worms or pulled out by birds, replant gently and try not to damage the roots. Planting them in soil that previously held brassicas helps with the problem of white rot, a fungal disease that attacks alliums, garlic and leeks. Regular weeding is vital. This is because onions hold their leaves upright, and so do not suppress weeds easily. If left for too long, weeds will overwhelm the crop, causing damaging competition.

In the kitchen

The past is a rich source of culinary inspiration. In an early treatise on vegetable cookery I came across this proverb: *L'autunno per la bocca et la primavera per l'occhio*, which loosely translates as autumn is for tasting, spring is for looking. The writer was Giacomo Castelvetro (1546-1616), a sophisticated literary refugee who fled the Roman Inquisition and came to England where, used to an Italian diet of carefully cooked vegetables, he found the meat- and sugar-heavy diet appalling. His book *The Fruit, Herbs and Vegetables of Italy* (1614) describes his idea of luxurious cooking – the freshest of vegetables cooked without fuss. It lists fruit and vegetables as they come into season, with simple, elegant ways of preparing them. It has many excellent ideas, such as steeping elderflower blossoms in vinegar or adding chopped onion to a purslane salad. The section on autumn contains some tasty suggestions for pumpkins – the flesh cut into fingers, floured, fried and served with juice of bitter Seville oranges, or smaller gourds boiled



whole and braised in butter. Another recipe uses the tips of pumpkin vines, cut off to palm-length pieces, tied in bundles and boiled, then dressed with melted butter, salt, pepper and bitter orange juice. *Agliata* also sounds tempting, a mixture of pounded walnuts, breadcrumbs and garlic, thinned with stock and eaten with pork or used to dress pasta.

Lately there's been a revival of using vinegars – called shrubs – as a base for cocktails and tonics. Adding vinegar to water dates back to Roman times but these fruit shrubs were popular in colonial America. Made from fruit steeped in sugar and vinegar, the name comes from the Arabic for drink – *sharab*. They are tart and sour and much more appetising than they sound.

This recipe is for elderberry shrub, but you could also use damsons, crab apples, quince, redcurrants or blackberries. Take a large, clip-top glass jar and fill with 250g elderberries. Pour over 500ml red wine vinegar. Keep the jar somewhere cool and dark and shake from time to time. After a couple of weeks, strain the liquid into a pan and heat gently, stirring in sugar to taste. When the sugar has dissolved bring the liquid up to the boil and boil for two or three minutes. Skim off any scum. Strain the shrub into a bottle and seal with a cork. Use the tart syrup mixed with water, tonic or soda to make a refreshing soft drink, or try mixing with white wine, sherry or bitters for a cocktail.

What to sow

- **'Radar', a white bulb streaked with green,** (from Tamar Organics) is a good onion set for autumn planting, with thick, green stems that can be chopped and eaten. Another favourite is 'Senshyu', with its squat, flattened, pale-gold bulbs, available from Thompson & Morgan. See page 31 for suppliers.
- **Shallots are sweeter than regular onions** – the torpedo-shaped banana shallot is my default cooking allium. I like 'Echalote Grise', available from The Garlic Farm (thegarlicfarm.co.uk).
- **Order seed now for a spring sowing of hardy 'Early Paris White',** from Real Seeds (see page 31). Onion seeds planted in late August should need transplanting out in early October about 15cm apart.

What to cook

- **Sauerruben** This is the turnip version of *sauerkraut* (grated, raw cabbage that has been fermented). Take **1kg grated turnips**. Squeeze them to release the juice and pack into a 1.5-litre clip-top jar, adding **½tbsp sea salt**. Push the matter down so there's 1cm of brine on top. Take a jam jar that will fit inside the clip-top jar, fill with water, put the lid on and use it to weigh the turnips down below the level of the brine. Cover with kitchen towel tied on with string to keep off insects. Leave for a few days, tasting every now and then. In cold weather the flavour will develop over months (weeks if it's warmer). Refrigerate to halt the fementation process.

> I let my sunflowers stand until frost and winds knock them down, as the heads heavy with seed offer food for birds and the hollow stalks stacked up beneath my rosemary make a haven for insects

November

In the garden

I like gardening on the edge of winter. Things are slowing down, weeds no longer grow like Topsy and the time-consuming job of watering large sections of the plot by hand no longer needs to be done. Instead there are tools to be cleaned and oiled, leaves to be raked, the shed to be tidied, and the odd bit of soft fruit pruning to be done. Chaos will descend again as inevitably as spring, but setting things straight feels good for now.

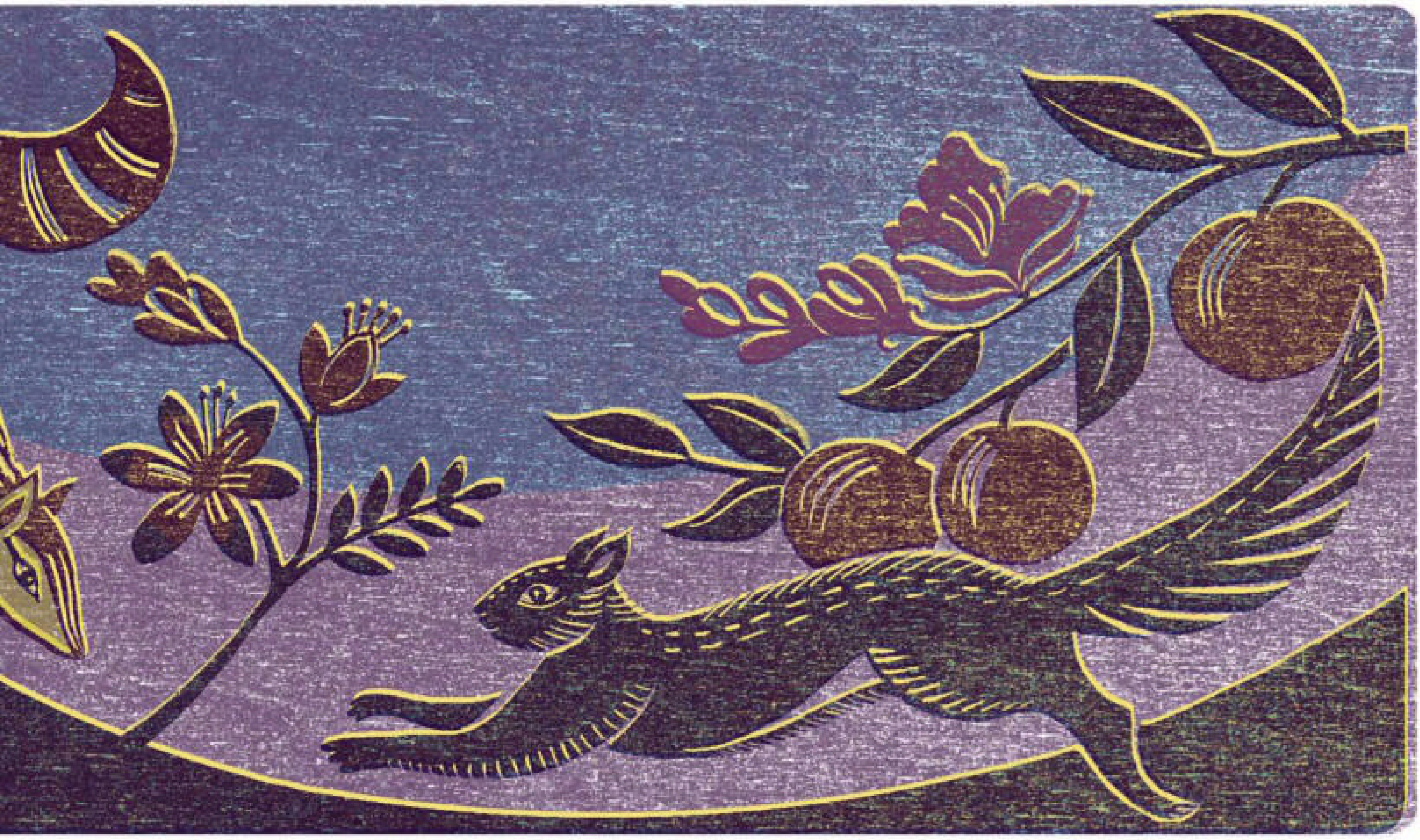
Your vegetable garden is a source of food, but the edges can also provide rich pickings for wildlife. The more complex and diverse your ecosystem, the fewer the pests attacking your crops. Luring insectivorous birds to your plot is highly beneficial and you're off to a good start with a compost heap, which will hold scores of woodlice, worms, snails, slugs and earwigs. Leave some wilder, weedy patches to encourage birds, butterflies, moths, and other insects; a small patch of nettles, chopped down regularly, will provide young plants for many common caterpillars to feed on; bramble, dock and thistle are all rich sources of food. If you're lucky, you may attract a hedgehog or a toad.

Encourage pollinators by making space for highly scented, nectar-producing plants. Train a honeysuckle over your shed or plan to grow sweet rocket, lavender or honesty next year. Now is the time to clean bird boxes, as the inhabitants will have moved on to winter roosts, and in so doing you can remove any lurking parasites. Trees provide a home to a multitude of creatures – consider planting a bit of native hedgerow, such as hazel, beech, hawthorn or rowan, or, if you have space (and time), a tree such as an oak. I let my sunflowers stand until frost and winds knock them down, as the heads heavy with seed offer food for birds and the stacked, hollow stalks make a haven for insects.

In the kitchen

Agrodolce is a culinary term that means sour and sweet and usually refers to a mixture of sugar and vinegar used either to dress or cook with. In this recipe it's used to transform small pickling onions or shallots into *cipolline in agrodolce*, the onions cooked but still firm and coated in sweet-and-sour syrup. Take 500g unpeeled weight of small onions, top and tail, and peel carefully. Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a deep-sided pan, add a bay leaf and a couple of cloves and gently brown the onions. Add two tablespoons of balsamic vinegar and two of white wine vinegar plus one tablespoon of sugar. Cover and cook until tender, adding a little water if they are catching. Allow to cool, cover, refrigerate and eat the next day as an appetiser or with roasted meats.

I'm always looking for new ways to cook chicory: the first here is sour-sweet, the second



subtly savoury. Pickled radicchio is quick to make, and is ready in hours not weeks. Discard any tired leaves and separate the rest, tearing the larger ones in half. Make a brine by heating 400ml of white wine vinegar, two tablespoons of sea salt and eight tablespoons of sugar. Allow it to cool, pour into a bowl and immerse the leaves in the liquid (weighed down with a saucer). Leave to soften for at least two hours. Drain to serve and eat as part of a winter salad with beets or cheese or smoked fish.

For colder days the heads can be griddled and served with *anchoiade*, an anchovy dressing. First make the dressing as it needs to develop. Crush a clove of garlic with a pinch of sea salt in a mortar and pestle, remove the paste and reserve with a teaspoon of olive oil. In the same mortar, pound six salt-packed anchovy fillets (or a tin of 12 smaller, oil-packed fillets), combine with two tablespoons of red wine vinegar and four tablespoons of olive oil, whisk well and leave for an hour. About 15 minutes before you want to eat, remove the outer leaves from the chicory heads and split lengthways. Season the halves on the cut side with sea salt and black pepper and rub in olive oil. Heat a griddle pan until smoking hot and cook the halves over a medium heat for five minutes, then turn over and grill the other side for three minutes or until tender (test with the point of a knife). Arrange on a plate and dress with the *anchoiade*.

What to do

- **Birds need water as well as food and nesting sites.** An upturned dustbin lid makes a good birdbath.
- **Net cabbages** against pigeons and protect oriental salads, spinach and chicory with fleece.
- **Mark your line of parsnips with a stick** as it's hard to find the plants when the ground is covered in snow.
- **Procure some manure** to rot down over winter. Dig over an onion bed so it has time to settle before spring.

What to cook

- **Apple and tamarind chutney** Makes approx five **350ml** jars. Take **1tbsp of dried pickling spices**, **450g chopped onions**, **300ml white vinegar**, **900g cored, peeled cooking apples**, **5cm lump dried tamarind**, **350g light brown sugar**, **2cm piece of ginger**, peeled and finely grated, **6 fresh red chillies**, deseeded and thinly sliced, **1tsp mustard seeds**, **100g raisins**, **sea salt, pepper**. Tie up the pickling spices in a small square of fabric. Soak the tamarind in boiling water. Simmer the onions with half the vinegar in a stainless steel pan for 10 minutes. Chop the apples into 2cm cubes and add to the pan with the remaining ingredients. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Rub the tamarind through a sieve with a wooden spoon straight into the pan. Stir well. Simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally to get a jam-like texture. Remove from the heat and spoon into sterilised jars. Cover with waxed paper discs, seal and store for at least a month.

WINTER

This is a good time to think about what you have learned throughout the past year in your own and other people's gardens. The cold days find Jojo sitting by the fire sketching ambitious plans in her notebook

December

In the garden

My allotment has a very specific aesthetic: a bit ramshackle, sometimes a little overgrown. It is productive enough, but I always strive to make it better. I prefer winter to autumn, when I am plunged into gloom, the good intentions of last spring behind me. Bindweed has taken hold, weaving a string of lantern-like seedheads through the branches of my apple tree; couch grass is knotting itself around the roots of the currant bushes; and the leaves of the gooseberry bushes are spotted with mildew. I berate myself for my sloppy gardening and, after picking a few armfuls of chard, late courgette flowers and salad, I usually run away without doing much. Far better is a crisp, winter day when the plants have died back and I can see the skeleton of my plot emerge once again.

Gardening in isolation means bad habits can creep up on you. To stimulate better practice, I visit other urban gardens. A frequent destination is a market garden in Dagenham, east London, where in 2012 Alice Holden transformed the glasshouses and growing spaces of a neglected local nursery into a small organic farm (growingcommunities.org/dagenham-farm). It was originally funded through lottery money secured by Growing Communities, a not-for-profit social enterprise that runs a veg box scheme and sponsors apprentice growers. Costs are now financed through the sale of fresh produce. In summer, the greenhouses groan with cucumbers, tomatoes and courgettes watered with stored rainwater, while glossy beds of chard create a red and emerald carpet. I return from September visits with bags of mixed leaves – pak choi, mustard, rocket, frilly lettuce and sorrel – as well as multicoloured heritage tomatoes, feeling that with a little more dedication I too could make a garden such as this.

In the kitchen

While otherwise delicious, when it comes to colour, winter cooking can verge on dingy. Import a little zing by using the viridifloric essence of herbs and spinach to tint sauces, soups and, in this case, aioli (garlic mayonnaise) a vivid green. Make a green oil by whizzing together 50-75g of parsley (later on, wild garlic and nettles work a treat, as do fennel tops) and 100ml of extra virgin olive oil in a food processor. When the mixture is smooth, push it through a sieve and you will have a bright-green oil with which to dye your aioli. Crush two peeled cloves of garlic in a pestle and place in a liquidiser with two egg yolks. Beat the yolks and garlic with a teaspoon each of salt and white pepper. Pour in the oil (150ml extra virgin olive oil including the green oil) in a thin stream, adding a little boiled then cooled warm water if it starts to get too thick.

Whisk in the juice of one lemon and then add 150ml of sunflower oil, again in a thin stream. Store in the fridge, covered until needed.

Just as green is in short supply at this time of year, so is crunch. I like to grow sprouting seeds on the windowsill. It's a fun thing to do with children and the sprouts themselves are bursting with goodness. Eat them raw in winter slaws of shredded cabbage, beetroot, red onion, coriander and chickpeas, add them to sandwiches or cook them in stir fries. I have a special sprouting jar with a mesh top, but you can use an ordinary jam jar and some coarse cloth held down with an elastic band. Take a clean jam jar, put two tablespoons of seeds (mung beans, radish, chickpeas, alfalfa or sunflower seeds) in the jar and cover with water. Fix the cloth on and leave to soak. Place your jar in a corner of the kitchen out of direct sunlight. The next morning drain off the water through the mesh/fabric so as not to lose seeds. Rinse with cold water and drain again. Try not to leave any water in the jar. Do this every morning and evening and on the fourth or fifth day, when your sprouts are growing, move them into the light to green up. Pull apart what you need, float them in water to get rid of any hulls (the outside of the seed) and then drain and use. Try them with mashed avocado, a poached egg and toast. They keep well for a day or two in a ziplock plastic bag in the fridge.

What to do

- **Read. Take advantage of inclement days to refresh your knowledge.** Recap on things you think you know (sowing and cultivation, for example) and gain inspiration for new directions in the coming year.
- **Use dry days to lay down paths.** Mulch fruit trees and bushes with compost or muck, prune blackcurrants and gooseberries, and thin out raspberries. Pull rotting leaves off brassicas and chicories, and pick off any slugs. If you happen to be near the sea, collect seaweed to cover your asparagus beds. Order leek seeds for January sowing.

What to cook

- **Cardoons** The cardoon was a favourite of the French chef Louis-Eustache Ude (1769-1846). This recipe is from his book, *The French Cook*, published in 1813. Acidulate a bowl of water with the **juice of 1 lemon**. With a paring knife, peel away the fibrous rib and spiky sides of a **bunch (around 900g) of cardoon stems**. Rub off any white fuzz with a clean tea towel and pop the stalks into the bowl. Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and drop in the cardoons. Cook for 12 minutes, drain, cool and slice into 1cm chunks. Make a tomato sauce by sizzling **2 cloves chopped garlic** in a pan with **2tbsp olive oil**, a pinch of **chilli flakes** and a **long strip of lemon peel**. Add **fresh, chopped marjoram** and **2 x 400g tins tomatoes** and cook for 15 minutes. Add the cardoons and cook for another 20 minutes.

Towards the end of the month give apple and pear trees a winter prune, aiming to remove crossing, diseased or broken branches first and then shorten the previous year's growth

January

In the garden

January is best spent reading seed catalogues by the fire. It's a time for taking stock and planning next year's crops, with flavour in mind. Making time for both horticultural and culinary tasks is a delicate balancing act. The kitchen gardener has to think ahead, to feed the earth in autumn in order to produce slim, green, finger-length courgettes the following June, and to turn the surplus fruits of late summer into wine-dark jellies or rich and savoury chutneys to sustain you until next year's harvest.

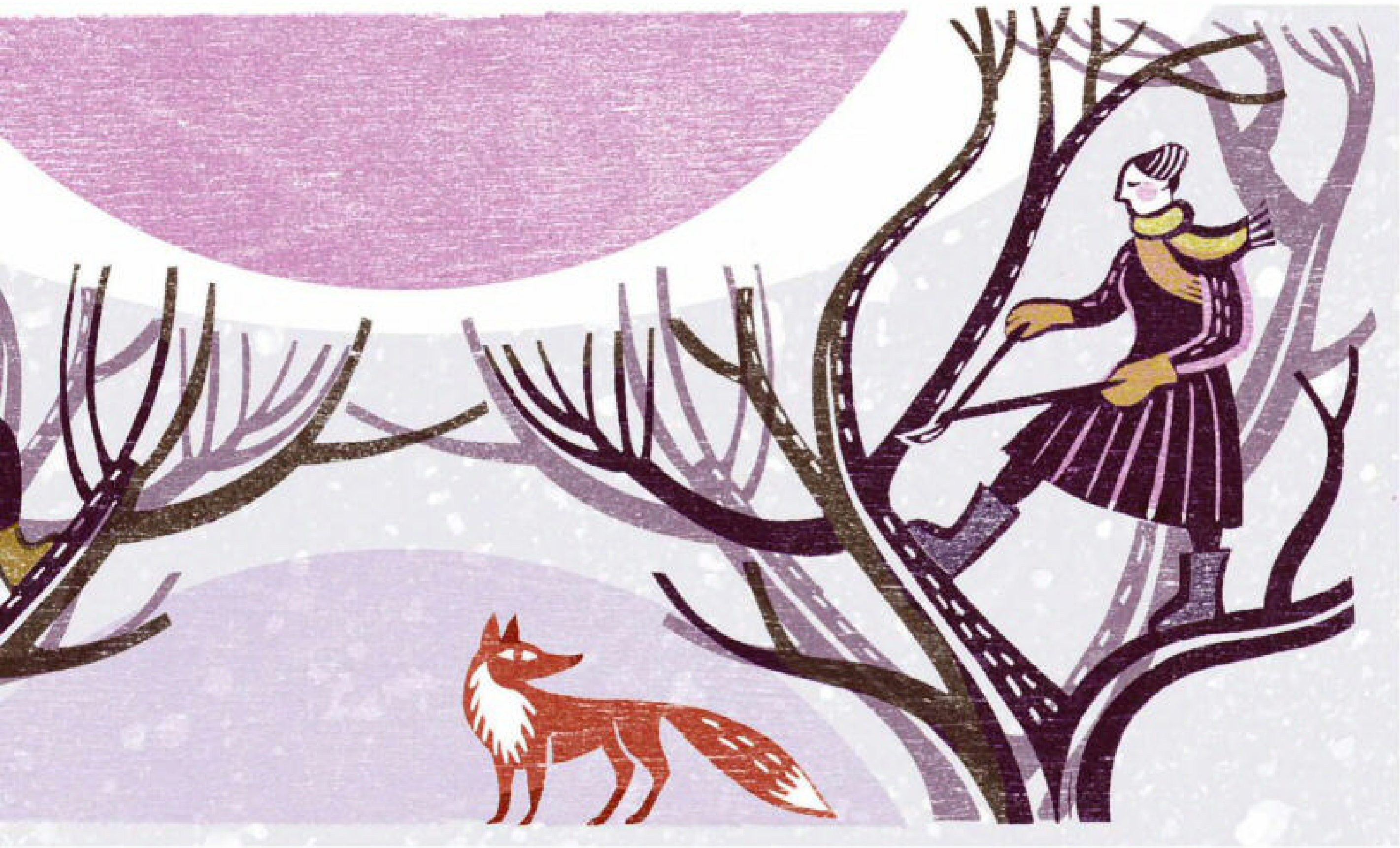
Any visits to your plot may well be more for boosting your mental health than for doing any actual gardening, but there are a few tasks for days when the sun is out. Most rhubarb needs little more attention than a good mulch with muck or compost and a check to see that crowns aren't waterlogged and rotting (check your asparagus too if you have it). If you have more than one well-established rhubarb crown, you might like to try forcing it. Pop an old chimney pot with a tile on top (or use a similarly tall plastic drum or bucket, ideally black, to retain heat) over a few promising buds and a few weeks later you will have long, straight, pale-pink stalks. Forcing weakens the plant, which will not be as productive in following years. For a slower kind of forcing (which results in great flavour) cover the plants in autumn with dead leaves a foot high (surrounded by chicken wire to stop the leaves blowing away). Leaf mould is a happy by-product of this method.

Towards the end of the month give apple and pear trees a winter prune. Refer to a good pruning guide but in short you are aiming to remove crossing, diseased or broken branches first and then shorten the previous year's growth. My plum trees have functioned as an aphid superhighway in the past, so I plan to spray them with an organic plant-oil winter wash.

In the kitchen

I used to be a much better cook than gardener. I got my allotment – where my vegetable-growing education began from scratch – a good decade after I had become competent in the kitchen. More than 15 years on, the desire to grow as much fresh produce as possible has forced me to become a more skilful gardener, while the need to respond to my hard-earned plenty has also made me a more imaginative cook. When I get back from a bright, cold morning at the allotment and sit down to a meal of peppery winter salad leaves (rocket, sorrel, mustard and deep-red chicory 'Rossa di Treviso') eaten with home-made sourdough bread and cheese with chutney made from last year's glut of apples and plums I feel good. The circle is complete.

Now is the time to plan for next season's harvest. I make extravagant wish lists from my favourite



catalogues and comb through cookbooks such as *Chez Panisse Vegetable* by Alice L Waters and Jane Grigson's *Vegetable Book* for cultivars and crops new to me. I check what did well last year, look back at past orders to see what I've forgotten and sort through the biscuit tin that holds my seeds to see which are still viable. I seem to be entering my tisane years so I will be reworking my herb garden with that in mind. Jekka McVicar has a beautifully packaged Herbal Infusion Seed Collection, which includes camomile, fennel, hyssop, thyme and lemon balm, and is available online (see page 31). To Jekka's infusion I normally also add bergamot, oat flowers, lavender and mint.

What you have growing in January will vary greatly. The better prepared will have stores of potatoes and carrots, with leeks, parsnips, chicory, chard, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and Jerusalem artichoke still in the ground. Sorrel is a wonderful winter crop. It thrives on very little attention and tolerates semi-shade. I adore it for its bright taste of lemons, especially welcome in midwinter when it makes a good alternative to basil to be added at the last minute, although when cooked it goes a slightly sludgy brown colour. I cut it into ribbons and use it on top of pizzas made with taleggio or to liven up salads of shop-bought 'Little Gem' lettuce, or waxy boiled potatoes dressed with thinly sliced shallots, olive oil and red wine vinegar.

What to sow

- **There is still time to plant garlic.** As long as the bulb gets a month at less than 10°C all should be well. The Garlic Farm (thegarlicfarm.co.uk) offers a Winter Planting Pack of 'Provence Wight', Carcasonne Wight', 'Vallelado Wight' and 'Elephant Garlic'.
- **Sow rhubarb sets** or cut your own from the young roots of older clumps by taking a root section 15-20cm long that ends in a fat bud. Plant in a trench full of manure or compost with the bud just showing and do not pick the first year. Ashridge Trees (ashridgetrees.co.uk) has 'The Sutton', 'Timperley Early' and 'Stockbridge Arrow'. Thompson & Morgan (see page 31) sells potted rhubarb plants, including 'Victoria' and 'Giant Grooveless Crimson'.

What to cook

- **Salads** that invigorate are perfect for January. This bright-tasting salad is made with fennel and blood oranges. Take **4 blood oranges, 1 bulb fennel (outer leaves removed), 1 head crisp chicory leaves (whichever type you have grown), 1tbsp olive oil, sea salt and black pepper**. Trim and slice the fennel into thin shavings. With a sharp knife cut off the top and bottom of the oranges, and remove the rest of the peel and pith as carefully as you can. Slice the oranges into thin discs and remove the pips. Arrange on a serving dish (or individual plates) with the fennel and chicory leaves and zigzag over the oil. Season and serve.

A herb garden should be more than aromatic window dressing. It should be a key part of your everyday cooking. Many herbs thrive in well-drained, less fertile conditions so a rock garden could be the answer

CHERVIL
BAY

February

In the garden

Most gardeners maintain two gardens, one real and susceptible to slugs, and one imaginary in which every plant succeeds. A bit of dreaming is fine – after all, a gardener's imagination is what sustains them through the winter – but at some point ambition must be turned into practical application.

In the past I've worked hard to make my allotment more productive by concentrating on two large central beds, well manured and closely planted with annual vegetables. My yield has increased, but other parts of the plot have suffered, notably the herb patch; low-growing thyme, marjoram and oregano tend to be swamped by over-vigorous borage, lemon balm and bindweed. Now I intend to enclose my herb garden to make it more functional. I could make a raised herb bed or plant a square of box hedging, but instead I am going to make a herb rock garden.

One of my favourite food writers, Patience Gray, author of *Honey from a Weed* (1986), spent half a lifetime in Apulia in southern Italy, in a house that backed on to a stony hillside fragrant with herbs and littered with aromatic shrubs and ancient olive trees. I can't recreate Apulia in east London, but I can create the well-drained, less fertile conditions many herbs thrive in. Having consulted *The English Rock Garden* by Reginald Farrer (1880-1920), I learn that the stones of the perfect rock garden should be laid so that there is a 'feeling of calm, of real inevitability and balance'. He advises using fewer, larger rocks (ideally limestone), buried deeply with their broadest side exposed for a flattened effect and with all rocks sloping backwards so that moisture runs back to the roots of the plants.

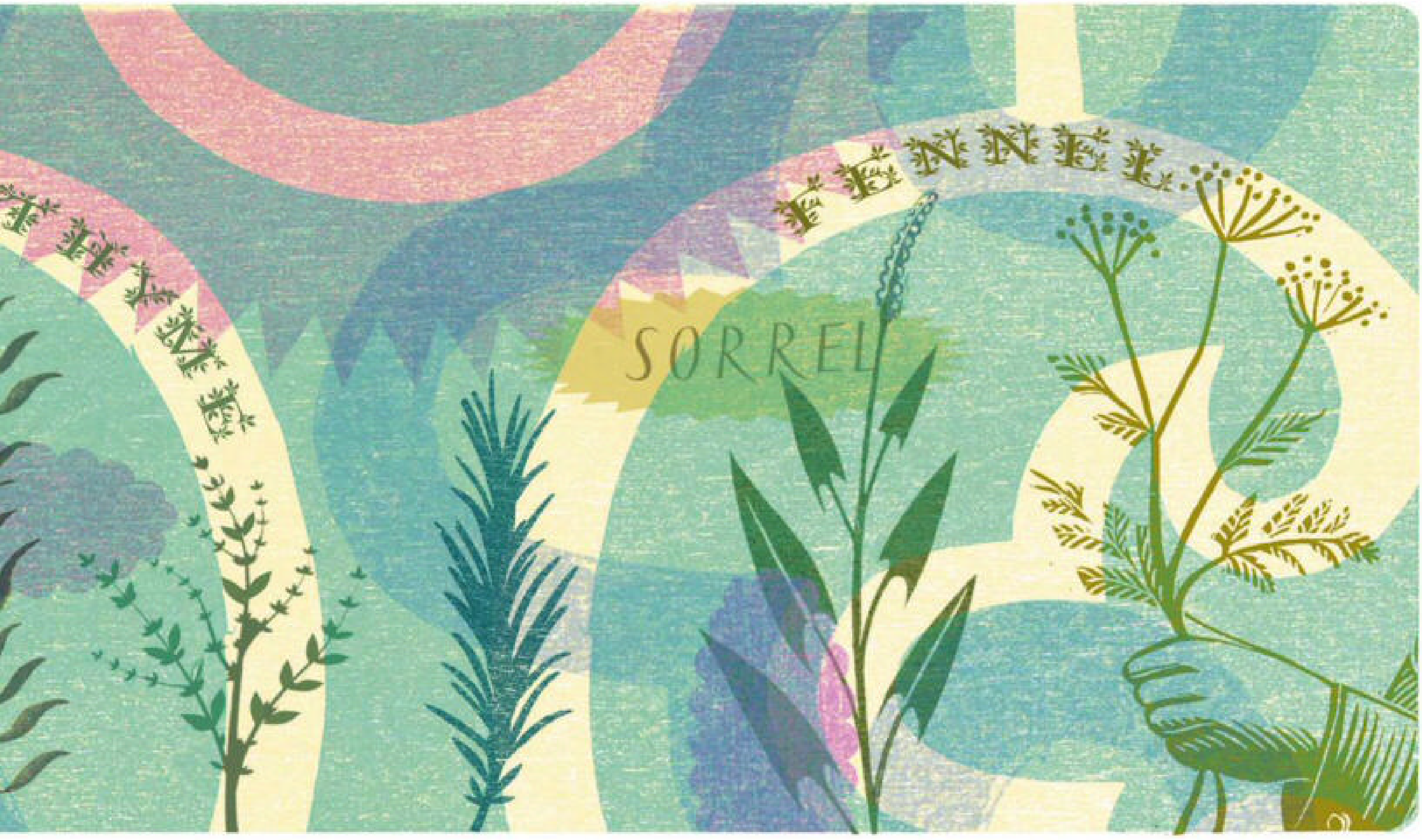
In the kitchen

A herb garden should be more than aromatic window dressing. It should be a key part of your everyday cooking. But how can you know which herbs you will find most useful? Here are some of my favourite uses for common herbs – food for thought as you wait for summer:

Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) I use thin strips of fresh sorrel in dals, omelettes and tarts, but you can also use it to make a delicate sauce with cream to serve with poached eggs or fish. Gently melt 20g of butter with 125g of sorrel leaves. Gradually add 125ml of cream, thinned with a little stock or water.

Tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*) Make an aromatic white wine vinegar by stuffing a bottle of good wine vinegar with a few branches of true French tarragon (more aromatic than the Russian kind) and leaving it in the bottle until it is used up. Used fresh, it goes well with chicken or fish, in vinaigrette, and in Béarnaise sauce.

Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*) Finely chop fresh chervil with equal quantities of chives, tarragon and



parsley to make the classic French culinary mixture *fines herbes*. For a classic dish, scatter a tablespoon over an omelette just before you turn it.

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) Traditionally, the Italian condiment *gremolata* is made with lemon zest and parsley and eaten with braised meat. My version uses the zest of half an orange, a minced garlic clove, four tablespoons of parsley, two sage leaves, a tablespoon of roasted hazelnuts, all finely chopped, combined with salt and black pepper.

Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*) Although more commonly thought of as a salad leaf, the peppery watercress is also a useful herb. Available all year round, it can be used to make herb butter or in place of mustard to flavour sauces or garnish meats.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) If you grow fennel, spend a summer day collecting pollen with a small artist's brush. Stored in a jam jar, it makes an aromatic dust for roast pork. If that's too fiddly, use sun-dried stalks to flavour stocks and fish soups.

Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*) A strong herb, rosemary should be used sparingly. I like to add a little to tinned tomato sauces, but you can also use a twig of rosemary dipped in olive oil to baste roast meats either on the barbecue or in the oven.

Bay leaf (*Laurus nobilis*) As well as using a bay leaf tied into a bundle with thyme and parsley stalks to make *bouquet garni*, I add one (plus a little milk) to the water I boil my potatoes in for mash.

What to do

- **Use any dry spells at the end of winter to prune plum trees.** Shaping can be tricky, so I've taken some 17th-century advice. William Lawson's *New Orchard and Garden* book has a woodblock print describing 'the perfect Forme of fruit tree', while John Evelyn advises keeping the small fruit tree 'hollow like a bell'.

What to cook

- ***Zhug* (Yemeni hot sauce)** This fiery Yemeni relish is as addictive as it is hot. You can swirl it into light broths and bean soups, mix it with yoghurt and dip your bread in it, or use it as a relish for meat or fish. You can use dried red chillies (deseeded and soaked for half an hour and then scraped of their pulp) instead of green chillies to make a red version or add chopped tomatoes and fenugreek seeds to turn it into a very similar Yemeni relish called *hilbeh*.

1tsp caraway seeds, **1tsp cumin seeds**, **seeds from 8 cardamom pods**, **1tsp black peppercorns**, **4 slim green chillies, deseeded and chopped**, **1tsp salt**, **6-8 garlic cloves**, **peeled and chopped, a bunch of parsley**, **1 bunch of coriander**, **juice of 1 lemon**. **Makes about 275ml.** In a spice grinder or mortar, mill the cumin, caraway, cardamom and black pepper until fine. Cut the stalks off the herbs and blend in a food processor with the other ingredients, scraping down the sides until you have a fine purée. Add the spices and combine. Keeps for a week or two in the fridge.

Although not essential, a greenhouse is ideal for growing salads or giving veg crops a good start before planting out.

Tips for sowing seeds

The act of sowing a seed is perfectly simple, but making sure you always read the packet, plan ahead and find the right method will ensure successful germination every time

WORDS **KATIE DUTTON**

Choose your sowing method

Direct sowing If you're sowing seeds for vegetables that have tap roots, such as carrots, parsnips and turnips, or don't want the hassle of replanting seeds from trays, direct sowing is best into fine, weed-free soil. If planting in rows, draw your trowel or tool edge along the soil to create a shallow channel. Sow seed thinly according to the seed packet instruction, then draw the soil back over the seeds and gently water. If your seeds are of a reasonable size to handle individually, you can use a dibber to create small holes and space your seeds out accordingly. Label at both ends of the row to avoid confusion come spring.

Sowing under glass If the soil isn't warm enough outside (see the section on temperature) or is too heavy, or you want to give your seedlings a sure start, try sowing in pots indoors or in a greenhouse. Water your compost first, then gently press it into a container to get rid of any air holes. Small seeds work best in a seed tray, large seeds in small pots. Evenly space your seeds in their container, leaving enough room to enable you to thin the plants out without damaging them and ensure that the seeds don't compete and stunt growth. Cover with a thin layer of seed compost and label. Some gardeners like to use a top dressing of vermiculite to help regulate moisture. Once your seedlings have their first set of true leaves, thin out and pot on, eventually planting them out to their final position once all risk of frost has passed.

Multiblock sowing Multiblock sowing uses less compost and takes less time as you can plant multiple vegetables all at once. Seeds are grown in clusters to create 'baby' vegetables, ideal for leeks, onions and round carrots. Fill a module tray with pre-watered compost and sow three to five seeds in a shallow hole, then lightly cover with grit. Do not thin out the seedlings, but wait for their first true leaves to grow, then plant them out to the correct spacing as directed on the seed packet.

JASON INGRAM

Other tips for success…

Plan ahead Use a calendar to plan your crops for the year ahead and ensure your kitchen garden flourishes all year round. As well as learning when to expect fresh produce, this will deter gluts and shortages. There is a lot you can sow successionally to ensure a longer harvest. In the UK, seed sowing generally begins in February with salad crops and finishes in autumn with planting broad beans for the following summer.

Choose fresh compost Fresh, shop-bought products are best; they generally encourage more germination than homemade composts as they are free from pests and diseases and have low levels of nutrients (high levels are unnecessary for seeds to grow). Stored compost from the previous year will have deteriorated, so is best avoided.

Check the temperature Before direct sowing outside, check that the soil is sufficiently warm – ideally above 8°C. Don't be put off if it's not quite warm enough, as some crops germinate at lower temperatures. Otherwise, use horticultural fleece, available from garden centres, to generate warmth and protect newly sown areas.

Use eco containers Garden centres have started to introduce recyclable containers, but you can save money and resources by reusing old plastic pots (make sure to wash them first) or everyday packaging found at home. Egg boxes and fruit and vegetable punnets work well as containers for small seeds, and cardboard tubes from toilet rolls are suitable for larger seeds.

Don't forget…

If you don't want to sow seed or miss the ideal month, you can buy plug plants, ready to simply plant up into your own plot. This is also a good way of trying just a few of a wide range of veg to see which you enjoy growing most.

You'll find more tips on seed sowing at **rhs.org.uk**. Turn the page for our favourite seed suppliers.

Look out for more unusual cultivars, such as this candy-coloured beetroot *Beta vulgaris* 'Chioggia' and the golden-fleshed *Beta vulgaris* 'Golden', available from many specialist seed suppliers.

Our favourite edible seed suppliers

If you're looking for inspiration for herbs and vegetables to grow at home, take a look at our selection of the best seed suppliers

WORDS SORREL EVERTON

Chiltern Seeds

You'll find an interesting, tried-and-tested list of seed-sowing choices in the Chiltern Seeds vegetable catalogue. Favourites include the climbing French bean 'Cobra', which proves resilient to variable British summers, providing a good crop time and again. If you have a sheltered, sunny spot, you could try aubergine 'Kermit', a small, green, Thai type, or if space is limited, the new 'Shooting Star' climbing, yellow courgette. **01491 824675, chilternseeds.co.uk**

Franchi Seeds of Italy

Founder Paolo Arrigo received the Slow Food UK Person of the Year award in 2020 for his dedication to promoting seed biodiversity. His seed selection focuses on endangered, heritage and ethical varieties with provenance. **020 8427 5020, seedsofitaly.com**

Jekka's Herb Farm

Fresh herbs can enhance your cooking and boost your well-being. Queen of herbs, Jekka McVicar, stocks 140 varieties of herb, and the website includes a handy list of her top ten culinary herbs to grow from seed – a great resource if you're starting out with herb growing or want to expand your own list. Although the nursery is mail order only, Jekka holds plenty of open days and masterclasses. **01454 418878, jekkas.com**

Kings Seed

Awarded Gold for Best Fruit and Vegetable Seed Range in at the 2020 Great British Growing Awards, Kings Seed offers an excellent range of edibles, with a good selection of organic vegetable seed and plug plant options. Good savings to be made on seed collections, such as the Easy Starter Vegetable Collection with ten easy-to-grow varieties. **01376 570000, kingsseeds.com**

Moles Seeds

An independent seed merchant with a good selection sourced from some of the best seed producers, both conventional and organic. Although wholesale, Moles Seeds will supply anyone looking for larger quantities, so great for smallholding owners and gardening groups. **01206 213213, wholesale.molesseeds.co.uk**

Pennard Plants

A 2019 RHS Master Grower, Pennard Plants sells one of the largest selections of edible plants, heritage and heirloom seeds, fruits and herbs, including over 80 heritage tomato cultivars. The nursery is run on organic principles and its range includes some interesting edibles such as 'Golden Self Blanching' celery with pale-yellow, stringless stalks. **01749 860039, pennardplants.com**

Real Seeds

All veg have been trialled and are only selected for sale if they grow well and taste good. Seed is open pollinated (non-hybrid), so can be collected and re-sown from one year to the next. Unusual offerings such as the 19th-century French tomato 'Peche Vilmorin', with an attractive, orange-pink, fuzzy skin, and 'Blue Fire', which starts out deep blue and ripens to red and black with gold splashes. **01239 821107, realseeds.co.uk**

Sea Spring Seeds

Every vegetable has been tested before it is included in the catalogue, which is updated year on year to ensure that the best edibles are included, and contains good cultivar choices and a wide range of veg (with a specialism in chillies). The website provides a selection of handy guides to growing. **01308 897898, seaspringseeds.co.uk**

Seed Co-operative

The basis for this initiative is that the future of food needs to be rooted in a diversity of genetics and wildlife. All seed is from open-pollinated plants, much of it registered biodynamic and all adapted to organic growing systems. **01775 840592, seedcooperative.org.uk**

Tamar Organics

A good range of vegetables for the organic gardener along with helpful growing advice. See the selection of sprouting seeds for that quick-growing, flavour-filled vegetable hit. Online discount for orders over £150. **01579 371098, tamarorganics.co.uk**

Thomas Etty

Among the range of heritage vegetable seeds are cultivars dating back centuries, meaning that there is always an interesting selection in the catalogue, such as 'Spanish Black' carrots dating from 1813 and newly offered perennial veg Alexanders, a native of Britain, with celery-flavoured leaf stalks and flower buds. **01460 298249, thomasetty.co.uk**

Thompson & Morgan

A familiar name, and indeed one of the largest, in the seed catalogue world with 160 years of knowledge and plenty of grow-your-own choices. Why not jump right in and order their Vegetable Seed Bumper Pack, which includes 35 varieties of veg and salads, plus a pair of garden snips. **0333 400 0033, thompson-morgan.com**

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